

The Coming of the Russian Mennonites

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C. Henry Smith

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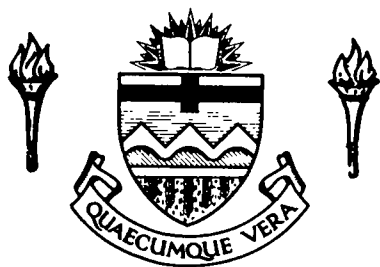
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THE COMING
of the
RUSSIAN MENNONITES

An Episode in the Settling
of the Last Frontier
1874—1884

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MENNONITE BOOK CONCERN
Berne, Indiana

1927

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To My History Classes
in
BETHEL COLLEGE
1922—1923
Grandchildren of the Pioneers Here Described
This Book Is Dedicated

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FOREWORD

The story told in the following pages of the migration of the Mennonites of South Russia to America in the middle seventies and early eighties for conscience sake is now put into print for the first time. This migration should be of interest not only as an incident in general Mennonite history, but as an episode in the settling of our western frontier as well.

For source material I have drawn largely upon the Mennonite periodicals of that time, western newspapers, diaries, old letters, and personal interviews with such old pioneers as still survive.

I am indebted to many friends who have helped me in one way or another in acquiring this source material, but especially to Dr. J. R. Thierstein and Dr. C. C. Jansen, both at that time of Bethel College; H. P. Krehbiel, secretary of the Mennonite Historical Society; Miss Riesen, librarian at Bethel; Rev. H. H. Ewert of Gretna, Manitoba, who was especially generous with material on Manitoba and who gave me liberally of his time in a tour of investigation through Manitoba, and Rudolph Goerz of Newton, Kansas, for the use of his father's copy of the *Zur Heimath*. John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana, also kindly opened up his private library to my use. Dr. Thierstein and Professor J. L. Suderman, of the Publication Committee of the General Conference, and Rev. H. R. Voth kindly examined the manuscript before publication, all of whom offered many valuable suggestions. But whatever errors there may be in the book are mine and not theirs. Among others to whom I am indebted are H. D. Penner of Beatrice, Nebraska; J. J. Balzer of Mountain Lake, Minnesota; C. E. Krehbiel of Newton, Kansas; D. E. Harder of Tabor College, and last but not least to my class in Mennonite History in Bethel College during the winter of 1922-23.

C. HENRY SMITH

March 1, 1927

I.

THE ANCESTRAL HOME IN PRUSSIA

The Mennonites of South Russia are of original Dutch stock for the most part, having come to Russia by way of northeastern Prussia. As early as the middle of the sixteenth century, if not earlier, Mennonite refugees from Holland found their way to the deltas of the Vistula and Nogat in Polish Prussia, upon invitation of ecclesiastical as well as lay noblemen, who were desirous of industrious farmers for their swampy and unfruitful estates in those lowlands. Religious toleration, to be sure, was not yet the settled policy of either Church or State anywhere; but the Mennonites of Holland were experts in the art of reclaiming swamp lands by means of dikes and canals. And so, because of their economic worth, they were welcomed by these noblemen where otherwise they might have expected nothing better than religious oppression.

These estates were first leased to the Mennonites by the successive owners for long periods of time until finally the former generally came into entire possession of them. Quite steadily, too, the Mennonite settlements were extended up the river in the region of Marienwerder, Graudenz, Swetz and Culm. While the lowland congregations were composed almost exclusively of Dutch refugees, the inland colonies contained a liberal sprinkling of Moravians, Germans and Swiss. Both Dutch factions, Flemish and Frisian, were represented among the congregations.

Among other privileges, these refugees were granted religious toleration as one of the conditions of their settlement along the Vistula. At first, living in isolated groups on lands hitherto but sparsely populated, they were able to lead a quiet and unmolested life. But in time as they grew in numbers and became prosperous, both in the country and in the towns, native citizens became jealous of the prosperity of these thrifty and sober Dutch farmers and artisans, speaking a foreign tongue and practicing a proscribed

religion. They were no longer burned at the stake, of course, or even imprisoned, as was being done in other states; but they were frequently hampered in the free exercise of their religion, and were denied many of the rights of citizenship. As early as 1550 the citizens of Elbing complained to the Polish King that "these Anabaptists are taking the bread out of our mouths"; whereupon the King was prevailed upon to order them out of town within fourteen days. A few of them left, but the town council intervening in their behalf, secured a postponement of the order. A little later the clergy, too, added their protest. After a number of delays the decree was finally forgotten without being carried out. The Mennonites of Danzig had a similar experience a little later. In 1572 the King was induced by certain tradesmen to sign an order requesting them to leave the land. But the Catholic bishop, whose estates the Mennonite farmers had brought to a high state of development, intervened in their behalf, and the order was not carried out.

All through the seventeenth century the Mennonites of Poland were harassed more or less by Church and State officials whenever it seemed profitable for one reason or another to do so. Like the Jews they were a proscribed people, and like them they were sometimes threatened by government officials for the purpose of extracting money from them for private gain. In 1642 Willibald von Haxberg, a minister of King Wladislaw IV, convinced the King that the Mennonites had been the cause of great financial loss to the merchants of Danzig and Elbing, and for that reason their property should be confiscated. Haxberg was given authority to seize the property. Despairing perhaps of receiving all the possessions of the Mennonites, the wily minister promised to leave them undisturbed in their former privileges upon payment of a certain sum of ransom money. They vainly appealed to their earlier promises of toleration and charters which had been granted them. But threatened by military force, they finally yielded to the blackmail of the greedy minister. Haxberg received about 50,000 thaler from the country churches, and a smaller amount from those in Danzig and Elbing. The Provincial Estates appealed to

the King in behalf of the Mennonites with the result that the latter were granted a new charter of rights confirming all their old privileges; but whether the money was returned by the minister is not known.

In 1676, after the settlements at Tiegenhof and the delta region had suffered heavy losses from broken dikes, the Stadtholder of Pomerellen speaking before the Marienburg Landtag, laid the blame for the catastrophe upon the Mennonites. God was punishing Danzig "the nest of the Mennonite sect", he said, for tolerating them within her jurisdiction. He brought a number of noblemen to his way of thinking who tried to force through an order for exile. But the Marienburg deputy, realizing the value of the Mennonite farmers to the country, appeared in their behalf. "One can easily tell" he said, "whether a lazy, drunken farmer tills the soil, or a sober industrious Mennonite." "Rather invite more of them than to drive out those already here." Far into the eighteenth century attempts were often made by jealous neighbors and fanatical clergymen to harry the Mennonites out of the land. But city councils, knowing the worth of industrious Flemish artisans, and both secular and ecclesiastical noblemen whose lands had been brought to a high state of productivity by skilled Frisian tenant farmers, usually succeeded in thwarting those demanding exile. And so, while the Mennonites of Poland lived continually under the fear of banishment, the threat was never rigidly carried out.

The Polish Kings in the main, unless pressed by special interests, maintained the promises made to the first settlers, and faithfully guarded their privileges. Charters guaranteeing these privileges were frequently confirmed by successive Kings all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A typical confirmation is that of the charter of 1732 granted by August II. This charter renews the guarantees given by former Kings in 1650, 1660, 1694, and 1699, and promises the Mennonites all the rights they had been granted in the beginning, including the right to worship in their public houses, to control their own schools and teachers, to baptize freely their own children, and to bury their dead in their own cemeteries. Military exemption is not men-

tioned specifically in these earlier charters, though it undoubtedly was one of the conditions of the first settlement. In fact military exemption was not confined to the Mennonites. Frequently rulers would offer it as an inducement to any industrious foreigners to occupy their unsettled lands. Mennonites were not asked to serve in the Polish armies, but they were sometimes asked to substitute noncombatant service. At the siege of Danzig in 1734, they were assigned the duty of guarding the city against fire, a task they performed successfully. Frequently, too, Mennonites were compelled to furnish and pay for substitutes, a privilege accorded others as well, however. Sometimes exemption money was demanded, as when in 1749 the sum was set at 5,000 gulden.

In 1772 Polish Prussia was united with East Prussia under Frederick the Great; and from that time on the Mennonites had a common history in these two provinces as regards their relation to the government.

In what is now the province of East Prussia, but at that time the original duchy of Prussia, a small Mennonite settlement was made as early as in the Vistula delta. The colony never grew large, however, and during the first hundred and fifty years the colonists went through much the same experience at the hands of the Prussian dukes as did their Polish brethren. When the duchy became a kingdom in 1701, the first King, Frederick I, desirous of finding settlers for repeopling the waste lands along the Niemen river which had just recently been robbed of half its population by a pestilence, sent an invitation to the Swiss Mennonites who just at this time, 1711, were being driven out of the canton of Bern. Although the inducements were attractive, the prospects of settling in a pest ridden land were not; and so only a small group of Swiss accepted the invitation. These located near Tilsit. The King furnished them with necessary farms and equipment, and granted them religious toleration including military exemption. In 1713 a small group from Danzig also located here under the same privileges.

Here, too, those in authority sometimes forgot the promises made by their predecessors. When in 1723 the recruiting agents

of Frederick William I seized six likely young Mennonites for service in his famous Potsdam giant guards, the Mennonites in the Tilsit settlement reminded the king of the promises made to them by the former ruler. This so angered him that he ordered their immediate banishment from the land. A number of them found refuge for a time with their Polish brethren, but later were again permitted to return. In 1732 the clergy again secured an edict banishing about one hundred families on the charge of Socinianism, an unfounded charge often made against the Mennonites by the State clergy during the eighteenth century in both Holland and Prussia. These found their way back to the Netherlands where now Mennonites were granted almost complete toleration. As a result of intercession on the part of the Dutch States General where Mennonite influence was strong, as well as of important commercial interests in Prussia, the order was recalled; and the Mennonites were permitted to remain on condition that they establish woolen mills in their settlement, for which there was now a great demand among the Prussians, and a task for which the Mennonites were well fitted by former experience. Most of the Tilsit colonists, however, about six hundred in number, had already left for Poland. Upon the accession of the tolerant Frederick the Great in 1740, the Mennonites enjoyed a generation of comparative liberty, and could settle anywhere in his dominions without molestation.

When Polish, or West Prussia, fell into the hands of Frederick the Great, the Mennonites of the Vistula and Nogat were greatly pleased; for Frederick had shown himself tolerant toward religious dissent and had already granted the Mennonites of East Friesland, which province he had inherited, exemption from military service. On the occasion of a celebration held in the city of Marienburg for the purpose of publicly proclaiming the oath of allegiance to the new King, the Mennonites, too, showed their loyalty to the new ruler by presenting him with a sample of the products of their lowland farms: two oxen, four hundred pounds of butter, twenty cakes of cheese, fifty chickens, and fifty ducks; a gift which tradition says the King received with great pleasure.

At the same time, too, they reminded him of the privileges which they had enjoyed under the Polish Kings, and which they hoped would be confirmed by Frederick. The next year the new King promised them: 1. Freedom of worship according to their custom; 2. The right to erect new church edifices; 3. Permission to establish their own schools; 4. Freedom from military service; 5. The privilege of substituting an affirmation for the oath; 6. The right to enter any line of industry open to others; 7. The right to bury their dead in their own cemeteries.

These privileges lasted for only a brief period, however, and did not continue to the end of even the reign of the tolerant Frederick. The growing spirit of militarism in Europe during the latter part of the century boded no good for the peace loving Mennonites. The Prussian war office, fearing that the further growth of the Mennonite settlements would weaken the military power of the Kingdom, since military service rested upon land ownership, induced the Royal Council to issue an order forbidding the Mennonites to buy any more land unless the original owner should keep enough of the estate to retain his military obligations. The King modified this order somewhat, permitting exceptions with his special permission. A census taken just then showed that Mennonites had expanded rapidly in recent years, and that at that time they owned some eighty thousand acres of land. Special exemptions were now also to be paid for. On June 20, 1774, an order was issued compelling the Mennonite congregations to pay annually a lump sum in lieu of military service of 5,000 thaler, about \$3,500 in our money, for the support of the military academy at Culm. The Mennonites, now thoroughly alarmed, and fearing further limitations upon their former privileges, desired a definite guarantee from the King in the form of a new charter of privileges. This the King granted them in 1780 in which were guaranteed all the promises of 1773 with the later limitations just mentioned. The State church, however, which was Lutheran, insisted that the Mennonite privileges especially of buying land be curtailed. Since the clergy were supported by a tax upon the lands of the members, the sale of the lands to non-Lutherans greatly re-

duced their income for church and school purposes. It was intimated that in nineteen Lutheran parishes among the Mennonite settlements, ten at least, were in danger of dissolution for lack of sufficient support. After the death of Frederick, the new King, Frederick William II, was induced in 1789 to issue an edict to the effect that Mennonite owners of landed property formerly belonging to Lutherans were forced to support Lutheran churches, schools and parish houses. The children of mixed marriages were to be brought up in the faith of the non-Mennonite parent. No more Mennonites were to be permitted to purchase homes in Prussia; but if a proposed settler owned property to the value of 2,000 thaler he might locate in certain restricted districts with the consent of the King. He and all his male descendents from the age of twenty to forty-five were to pay a special tax annually of one thaler.

It was evident now that both State and Church were determined to stop the further growth of Mennonitism. Hampered by heavy taxes, unable to secure new homes for their growing young people, and fearful of the future, the Prussian Mennonites began to look about for a new home where they might be free to live up to their convictions without governmental restraint. After considering several possibilities, including America, they finally decided to accept the invitation which fortunately had been extended them just a few years before, in 1786, by Catherine of Russia. In the years immediately following, about half of the whole Prussian church, somewhat over 6,000 souls, left their old homes in the fertile deltas of the Vistula to start life all over again on the fertile, though desolate steppes of southern Russia, along the lower Dnieper and the Molotschna.

A brief survey here of a few of the social and religious practices of the Prussian church at the time of the emigration will not be without its bearing upon our story later on.

The Prussian Mennonites, especially those of the city of Danzig, kept in close social contact with their brethren in Holland until far into the eighteenth century; and they retained for a long time many of the customs and practices which they brought with

them from their original Dutch home. It was not until near the close of the century that Dutch gave way to the German in the pulpit, and to the Low Dutch (*Plattdeutsch*) in the home and on the street. It was their characteristic pride of ancestry, no doubt, that prevented them from learning the language of the laboring man of their adopted land—Polish.

Both Dutch religious factions, Flemish and Frisian, were still very much alive. Of the two the Flemish were the more conservative in their practices, and were found largely in the country churches. A certain elder Wiebe writing in 1790 says that in the congregations about Culm some conservatives still wore hooks and eyes instead of buttons, and shoe strings instead of buckles; and the men still wore beards. They believed in a strict application of the practice of "shunning" to all those who were excommunicated from among their number. Marriage with outsiders was strictly forbidden, even with the Frisian branch of the church. Even the more liberal Frisians, however, maintained a rigid discipline. Dancing, card playing and drunkenness were punished with excommunication. In 1781 a man in Danzig was expelled because he married his deceased wife's sister. In a conference composed of several congregations soon after this it was decided that all marriages declared unlawful in 3. Moses, 18, would be forbidden. Young people were hardly admitted to membership under twenty, and required one or two adults to sponsor them at the time they applied for membership.

Sermons were still read from manuscript, the preacher remaining seated, among the Flemish; though off hand speaking was being introduced among the Frisians. There was no pulpit; but a row of chairs on a raised platform in one corner of the room was reserved for the preachers, of whom there were three grades.—*Aelteste*, *Prediger*, and *Armendiener*. Preachers were elected, and when there were several candidates they were selected by lot. They were unsalaried and untrained, and for that reason selected from among the wealthier classes who could afford to take the time required for the performance of the heavy duties demanded of them. There were no church organs. A *Vorsinger* led the

congregational singing from a new German hymn book which had just been printed for the first time in Danzig in 1780, or perhaps from a copy of Lobwasser's Psalms, or still very seldom from the old Dutch Psalm book. There was no preaching at funerals. The entire service on these occasions consisted in singing a long memorial hymn composed for the occasion by a close friend of the deceased. The hymn was usually long enough to require the full time of a modern burial service. The funeral song composed for Hans Steen, a well known minister in Danzig, who died in 1781, by his friend, Hans Momber, consisted of twenty-four stanzas.

For many years services were held in private houses, and where more room was needed, in large barns. But by the close of the eighteenth century most of the congregations were provided with meeting houses. By the side of the church was the alms house; for the Mennonites took good care of their own poor. Each congregation, too, was likely to be provided with a school-house where necessary.

The only literature found in the home outside of the Bible, and perhaps George Hansen's or some other confession of faith, was the *Wandering Soul*, or perhaps a stray Dutch copy of the works of Menno Simon or of the Martyr's Mirror in the same language, perhaps no longer read by the younger generation.

In many respects the Prussian Mennonites, living as they did in compact groups, isolated from their Polish neighbors by a distinct language, and a forbidden religion, in charge of separate schools, formed a self-sufficing social and economic as well as religious unit. They were thus the better able to perpetuate their religious and social ideals, and to maintain their identity,—a fact which explains much of the history of their children in South Russia.

As already suggested, nearly all of these Mennonites were of Dutch extraction, and the descendants of rather a limited number of ancestors as is shown by the following interesting study made in 1912 of Mennonite names in the two former Prussias. According to this study there are today among the ten thousand Mennonites of these regions 369 family names of which the following are

the most common: *Penner*, 527; *Wiens*, *Wiehns* 499; *Dueck*, *Dieck*, *Dyck* 492; *Classen*, *Klaasen* 409; *Wiebe* 434; *Janzen*, *Jantzen* 292; *Ehnz*, *Entz* 275; *Janz* 254; *Freese* 254; *Regehr*, *Regier* 253; *Harder* 184; *Ewert* 166; *Paul* 163; *Neufeld* 161; *Fast* 157; *Franz* 141; *Friesen* 140; *Reimer* 140; *Epp* 131; *Feiguth* 120; *Albrecht* 120; *Nickel* 118; *Peters* 107. Nearly one-half of the entire population it will be seen is embraced in the first twenty-one names. The other half is spread over the remaining 348 names, the vast majority of which include but one or two isolated families that came into the church since the settlement in Prussia.

The author of this study says further that the entire list may be classified under four groups.

1. The merchants and artisans who first settled in Danzig and Elbing seemingly came from the industrial classes of the larger Dutch cities. The following names are of undoubted Dutch origin, and are not found in the country congregations—*van Almonde*, *van Amersfort*, *Backrach*, *van Benningen*, *Conwentz*, *van Duehren*, *Dunckel*, *van Dyck*, *Eggerath*, *Engman*, *van Eck*, *Focking*, *van Haegen*, *Hansen*, *van Kampen*, *Kaenhoven*, *Lamberts*, *Momber*, *van Riesen*, *van Roy*, *Rutenberg*, *van Steen*, *Utesch*, *de Beer*. The sudden disappearance of old as well as the sudden appearance of new family names is due to the fact that especially during the seventeenth century there was a lively migration back and forth between Danzig and Holland.

2. The second group includes the Flemish families in the large Delta which were subject to only a slight change from migration. The most common names are—*Claassen*, *Dyck*, *Dieck*, *Enz*, *Epp*, *Feiguth*, *Harder*, *Neufeld*, *Penner*, *Regehr*, *Regier*, *Reimer*, *Thiessen*, *Warkentin*, *Wienz* and *Woelke*. All of these are as common today as they were two hundred years ago. Among them are a number of evident German origin.

3. The third group of names of the Frisian churches of the Orloffersfeld and Thiensdorf congregations are sharply divided from the other groups. The following are the most common: *Albrecht*, *Allert*, *Bestvater*, *Dau*, *Dirksen*, *Froese*, *Friesen*, *Funk*,

Grunau, Harms, Jantzen, Mekelberger, Martens, Nickel, Pauls, Quapp, Quiring, Unger, and Wiehler.

4. The fourth group is found principally in the upper Vistula congregations: *Adrian, Balzer, Bartel, Ewert, Franz, Goerz, Kopper, Kliever, Kerber, Schroeder, Stobbe, Unrau, Voth.*

An interchange of these four groups was not common until within the past hundred years since which time many families have moved from the country churches into the cities, and the sharp social distinctions between Flemish and Frisians have been removed.

The uncommon names of *Rogalski, Sawatzki, Schepanski, and Tellitzki* are of Polish origin. *Hamm* and *von Riesen* are undoubtedly from Sweden. The ancestor of the *Schultz* family is said to have come from Pomerania to Tiegenhof in the seventeenth century. A number of non-Mennonite families with new names were also continuously added.

This brief review of the most common Mennonite names of the Prussian Mennonites at the time they emigrated to Russia is not without interest in the later development of our story. We will meet them all again on the steppes of South Russia and Siberia as well as on the prairies of Kansas and Manitoba.

¹See Gustav Schultz—*Mennonitische Blätter* for 1912.

II.

A CENTURY IN THE LAND OF THE CZARS

To the Prussian Mennonites, the attractive invitation sent them by Catherine of Russia just at the time of their greatest need must have seemed like a special act of Providence. Many of them turned their faces toward the proffered asylum. It was not the first time, however, that this hardhearted, though farsighted, ruler had offered liberal inducements to thrifty German farmers for settling on the Crown lands of her Tartar frontier. As early as 1763 soon after her accession to the throne, she had promised most liberal terms to any desirable colonists who might wish to locate upon her newly won lands along the Volga. These promises included free transportation; religious toleration, with the right of establishing and controlling their own churches, schools, and their own forms of local government; loans with which to establish factories and other industries; and military exemption.

As a result of these attractive terms thousands of Germans of every faith found their way into South Russia during the next forty years. But especially favorable was the offer to those religious sects which were more or less restricted in their religious and civil liberties under Prussian and other German autocrats. One of the first of the groups to accept Catherine's liberal terms was a colony of Moravian Brethren who located along the Mohammedan frontier, near Saratov in 1763. These were perhaps attracted as much by the prospects of an inviting missionary field among the Tartars, as by the desire for religious liberty.

It was a little later, in 1786, that the special invitation was sent to the Mennonites along the lower Vistula. This was just a few years after Catherine had wrested additional territory from Turkey bordering the Azov. Much of this became Crown land upon which she wished to settle industrious farmers whose well kept fields might serve as models for the shiftless nomadic tribes

about them. Catherine had perhaps heard of the Mennonites and their work of reclamation in the swamps of the lower Vistula, through her generals who had spent several winters in eastern Prussia during the Seven Years' war. At any rate, however that may be, it was in the above year that she held out liberal inducements through her special representative at Danzig, George van Trappe, to the Mennonites of that region to migrate to her Crown lands in South Russia.

This invitation, as just indicated, found a ready response among the Prussian Mennonites. Two emissaries, Jacob Hoepfner and Johan Bartch, were immediately dispatched to spy out the land. Accompanied by van Trappe, these men left in the fall of 1786, and returned a year later after making a careful investigation of various locations offered them along the lower Dnieper and after meeting Prince Potempkin, the governor of New Russia, as well as the Empress and the Crown Prince at St. Petersburg. Liberal terms were promised by the Empress to all Mennonites who desired to immigrate, including religious toleration; military exemption; sixty dessiatine (about 175 acres) of land for each family; free use of the Crown forests; tax exemption for ten years; no Crown dues after that, but an annual fee of fifteen kopeks (seven and one-half cents) per dessiatine; a monopoly of the distilleries and breweries within the settlement (otherwise granted to the nobility only); free transportation from Prussia to their new homes; a loan of five hundred rubles (\$250.00) to each family; and support for each family until the first harvest at the rate of ten kopeks per day for each person. They were to have complete control over their own churches and schools with a liberal degree of local autonomy in self-government within the settlement. Religious propaganda among the native Russians, however, was forbidden.

Great interest was aroused throughout the Vistula churches in the emigration movement by the returned deputies. The Prussian government, however, while hampering the further growth of the Mennonites, yet was not quite willing to lose such prosperous and industrious farmers. Passports were granted grudgingly to

such as had property; and for that reason the first colony of emigrants was composed almost entirely of the poorer classes. By the fall of 1788 over two hundred families had started on the long journey to their new home, by way of the Baltic to Riga, thence overland to the Dnieper, down that river to the site selected for the first settlement on the Chortitz, a small branch of the Dnieper, about fifty miles below the present town of Ekaterinoslav.

CHORTITZ

The first winter this band of colonists was forced to spend enroute at Dubrowna, because of unrest among the Tartars along the Turkish frontier to the south. While here their number was increased to two hundred and twenty-eight families, all of whom were supported by the Russian government until they reached their home on the Chortitz in the summer of 1789. Later immigrants came directly overland from Danzig by way of Brest Litovsk, Ostrog, and Ekaterinoslav, the journey lasting about three weeks if all went well. In 1797 one hundred and eighteen more families joined the original group; and by 1800 the colony numbered over four hundred families.

The Chortitz region was hilly, with a rather barren, rocky soil without any trees, but heavily covered with grass, and well adapted to stock raising. Being poor and inexperienced in the best methods of cultivating their new farms, these first colonists suffered the usual hardships of pioneers. Eight villages were laid out. The earliest houses were made of mud walls with thatched roofs. A long rainy spell during the first part of August did not add to their comfort. Their food was poor, consisting largely of mush made from mouldy rye flour secured from distant Russian supply granaries. A number died of dysentery in the early period. Government support, now that they had reached their destination was meager. During the first winter, however, many families had to be cared for by the Government in the neighboring fort of Alexandrowsk. The usual frontier lawlessness added to their hardships. The country round about abounded in vagabonds and outlaws. Their baggage, such as reached them at all, was either

spoiled by the rains or pillaged by thieves. For several years these conditions prevailed. A contemporary writer in speaking of their hard lot calls them *blutarm an Leib und Seele*. At their first communion service in 1790, their elder Penner felt sorely grieved at the necessity of officiating at this sacred service without proper footwear, owning nothing at the time but a pair of *Bastel Schue* the usual foot-gear of the natives in times of poverty. Several of the slightly more prosperous members of the congregation finally by dint of considerable effort gathered together a pair of boots for the elder, thus enabling him to be clad in a manner becoming his station. Loud were the sobs, it was said, that were heard throughout the audience on this occasion as the participants of this first communion service were reminded in their present miserable condition of the prosperous and happy homes they had left behind them in Prussia. In 1803 their distress was relieved somewhat by material aid furnished them by wealthier colonists who remained with them for a short time on their way to a new settlement on the Molotschna.

Many of the settlers had expected to become rich within a few years; these in their disappointment, turned against the leaders of the movement, Hoepfner and Bartch, as the cause of their distress. Hoepfner, with more means than most of the other settlers, had secured for himself a choice bit of land on the wooded island in the Chortitz on which he built a house more substantial than others could afford. The discontented element conspired against him, accusing him of using his position as leader to his own aggrandisement. They finally secured the arrest of Hoepfner who was sent to Ostrog to prison for one year, when he was ordered released by the Czar Alexander. After his release, refusing to join the colony, he became a citizen of the nearby town of Alexandrowsk. He spent the last years of his life on the farm of his son; and before his death asked to be buried on his own estate, rather than in the common cemetery by the side of those who had caused him so much trouble in his early career. But time is a great healer of wounds. In 1889, on the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the colony, the grandchild-

dren of the men who drove Hoepfner to prison, erected a monument to his honor on the spot of his burial.

In 1796 Catherine died. The colonists fearing lest her successor, Paul, might forget the promises made by his mother, desired a written guarantee of the privileges that had been granted them. This they secured in 1800 through the efforts of a special deputation which had been sent to St. Petersburg, in the form of a written charter signed by Paul I, confirming in perpetuity all the promises made in 1786.

MOLOTSCHNA

This guarantee again revived the interest in the emigration movement, which in the meantime had cooled somewhat among the West Prussian Mennonites. In 1803 a new colony was founded south of Chortitz, in the province of Taurien, along the Molotschna, a small stream flowing into the sea of Azov. During the first year three hundred and forty-two families arrived from Prussia, forming a settlement of eighteen villages along the Molotschna. To these were added five years later ninety-nine more families. An addition of two hundred and fifteen families arrived in 1820, including a group known as the Alexanderwohl congregation. The Gnadenfeld congregation came in 1835, to be followed a few years later by the Waldheim congregation in Polish Russia. By 1840 about seven hundred and fifty families had located in the Molotschna settlement. By this time the special inducements that had been offered to immigrants to settle in these regions had ceased; and later immigration was turned into other directions.

The Molotschna region, too, was a level treeless steppe, but of fertile soil, well on the outskirts of civilization. Just to the south were still to be found bands of half savage, nomadic Tartars who hated the frontier settlers as did our Indians the American pioneers. These bands often made raids upon the Mennonite settlements, driving off their horses and cattle. After one of these raids had resulted in the murder of four Mennonite settlers, the Russian government instituted more drastic measures against the

Tartars, forbidding them the right to carry their usual weapons, long poles spiked and weighted at the ends, which they usually carried when on the hunt.

The Molotschnaites, unlike their brethren, the Old Colonists, coming from the wealthier and more substantial classes in Prussia, prospered from the beginning. Some of them came with substantial sums of money for which they soon found a ready demand among the poorer colonists both in their own and the Chortitz settlements. Out of three hundred and twenty-two of the first immigrant families, only sixty-three accepted the aid which the Government had offered them. The first market for their grain and dairy products was the nearby city of Taganrog; but by 1833 Berdiansk on the Black Sea became their chief trading center.

OTHER GROUPS

In addition to these two large Mennonite colonies, several smaller groups had located within the Russian empire in the meantime, practically on the same conditions. These, together with several small congregations originally in Poland but later in Russia, may be roughly divided into three groups.

1. Prussian Colonies Which Migrated Independently of the Two Large Settlements Mentioned Above

a. *Deutsch-Kazun*, and *Deutsch-Wymisle*, along the Vistula near Warsaw were daughter colonies of the Graudenz and Culm congregations in West Prussia. They were founded during the latter part of the eighteenth century when that region was still under Polish jurisdiction, but found themselves within the empire of the Czar when the final Polish partition took place. A number of the members of these congregations emigrated to the Molotschna settlement during the early nineteenth century, and from these some of them finally found their way to America.

b. The settlement at *Deutsch-Michalin*, near Maknofka, on the western border of the province of Kiev, just across from Volhynia was composed of Prussians who had migrated to that region about the same time the first colony came to Chortitz. In

1802 many of these Michaliner, dissatisfied with their land contracts, moved over into Volhynia near Ostrog where they finally developed a number of villages including Karoldswald, Antonofka, Waldheim and Fuerstlandsdorf. They were granted small farms here on the estates of a nobleman on terms quite similar to those offered the large colonies on the Crown lands at Chortitz and Molotschna. This small group did not prosper as well, however, as those who remained at Michalin. They remained poor throughout their stay in Russia, and devoted themselves largely to small farming, dairying, linen weaving and day labor. They were influenced more than any of the other Mennonite groups by their Polish environment; and at the time of their American emigration were among the least prosperous, and the most backward both socially and religiously of all the groups that found their way to the new world in the early seventies.

c. In 1853 a small colony of Prussians under the leadership of Claas Epp left the West Prussian churches because the new constitution granted by the King a short time before demanded universal military service of all Prussian subjects. Since the two old colonies had already been closed to further settlement on the earlier favorable terms, this group located on what was called the "Salt Tract" along the Volga, in the province of Saratov. The first colony was called *Koeppenthal*, after the Russian Staatrath, von Koeppen. Several years later another group emigrated into the same region, but some miles north in the old province of Samara, where they established the colony of *Alexanderthal*. The terms of settlement here were also quite liberal, and included military exemption. By 1874 a number of Mennonite villages had been established along the Volga.

2. Non-Prussian Groups

a. Among these was a colony of *Swiss* who had migrated to Polish Russia from Galicia before the close of the eighteenth century. They had originally come to Galicia from the Palatinate, and Montpeliard, France; and by 1785 had located in Polish Russia among the earlier settlements of Huterites and Prussian con-

gregations. They were of original Amish descent, and seemingly had some difficulty in fitting in with other groups. After considerable of shifting from place to place some of them finally found a resting place at Eduardsdorf, near Dubna in the province of Volhynia in 1815. By 1837 two more congregations were established—Horodischitz, and Waldheim. In 1861 the Eduardsdorf congregation moved to the east side of the province near Jitomir, and founded the colony of Kotosufka. These were all of the same group that had originally located in Galicia, some of whom had remained in that Austrian province. Their Swiss origin is shown by such common names as Krehbiel, Schrag, Rupp, Stuckey, Kaufman, Flickinger, Miller, Graber, Goering, etc.

b. The *Huterites*, though not organically connected with the Mennonites, yet share with them a common Anabaptist ancestry, and differ in their fundamental beliefs only in the matter of communism. Their paths have often crossed in history, and no story of either Russian or American Mennonites is complete without at least a brief reference to the heroic story of the followers of Jacob Huter. Originally from the Tyrolean Alps and Moravia, fierce persecution almost completely rooted out their faith. Such as escaped the stake and successfully resisted the pressure to force them back into the Catholic church finally found their way to Hungary. But here, too, they suffered untold hardships for the sake of their beliefs. In 1767 a remnant of them escaped to Wallachia where for a few years they enjoyed peace, but for a short time only: raids from the nearby Turkish armies forced them to seek another asylum. In the early seventies a Russian general who had come in contact with them, Count Romanizov, offered them a refuge on his estate at Wischenka on the Desna river, in the province of Tscherinogov. In 1782 their number was increased by the addition of fifty-six souls from Hungary.

Here on the estate of this nobleman they prospered until 1800, when in order to escape serfdom at the hands of the successor to their benefactor who had died, they moved to Crown lands nearby where they established several Bruderhofs. But internal dissensions caused another migration. Some went to

Chortitz; others in 1842 found their way to the province of Taurien near the Molotschna, where they founded the Bruderhof Huterthal. In 1853 they established another community nearby which they called Johannesburg, and in 1857 two more. Some of them during this period left the Bruderhofs and located in other villages on private farms. In 1874 all these groups emigrated to America. The Huterite colonies in Russia were not large. At the time of their emigration into Russia there were perhaps less than forty families. There were no outside additions, of course, during their stay in Russia. That they had increased but little in the course of their wanderings throughout Europe during the more than three centuries of their history is shown by the fact that the number of family names of the whole group had been reduced to hardly more than a dozen by this time, all of whom are today found in America.¹

3. Daughter Colonies

The two large pioneer colonies in course of time outgrew their original land allotments, and thus were forced to found daughter colonies for their surplus population. Sometimes these new settlements were located on lands purchased by the older colonies as municipal enterprises; at other times they were found on lands rented from wealthy noblemen; frequently wealthy Mennonites purchased large estates of their own not connected with any of the village settlements. By the time of the American emigration several important daughter colonies had been established. Of the following the first three were founded by Chortitz and the fourth by Molotschna: (a) *Bergthal* was established in 1836, about one hundred and thirty miles east of Chortitz in the same province. By 1874 the settlement consisted of several villages, all of which migrated bodily to America. (b) *Borsenko*, west of Chortitz, also in the same province was established in 1870. This was the home of the Kleingemeinde immigrants to Manitoba. (c) *Grossfuerstenland* was located on the Grand Duke's private

¹On the authority of Professor D. E. Harder of Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas.

estates near Melitopol in the province of Taurien in 1864. This colony later migrated bodily to the Western Reserve in Manitoba. (d) *Karassan*, in the Crimea was founded in 1862, and became the home of the Krimmer Brethren who migrated to Kansas in 1874.^a

Each of the groups above mentioned with the exception of one or two of the daughter colonies formed independent ecclesiastical units; and furnished large contingents to the emigration movement in 1874.

As to the exact number of Mennonites who came from Prussia and elsewhere to Russia from 1788 to the time of the American emigration, students of Mennonite history are not quite agreed. But an estimate of about 8,000 is perhaps not far wrong. Of these at least 6,000 located in the Chortitz and the Molotschna colonies, and perhaps 7,000 or more were Prussians. These original 8,000 had increased by 1874 to approximately 45,000, a rather unusual population increase when compared with population growth elsewhere.

Of course, it must be remembered that Mennonites were not the only Germans in Russia at this time. All told, there were perhaps nearly 500,000 German colonists—Lutherans, Catholics, and Reformed, as well as Mennonites, mostly in South Russia and the Volga region—all enjoying the privileges of local autonomy nearly identical with those granted the Mennonites.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

The Mennonite settlements in Russia furnish an interesting example of the course Mennonitism takes where it is free to apply its principles, economic and social as well as political to every day life. For the first time in their history Mennonites were encouraged here in the land of the most arbitrary ruler of Europe to expand their settlements, and to practice their religious beliefs according to their consciences. Catherine was so anxious to ob-

^aSagradovka, in Cherson was settled by Molotschnaites in the early seventies. For colonies established after the American emigration see P. M. Friesen's *History of the Russian Mennonites*.

tain industrious German colonists that she offered them privileges far above those of her own Russian subjects. The colonists, Mennonites, as well as others, were granted almost complete autonomy in such matters as local government, school control, and religious worship. The Mennonites adopted such types of political and economic institutions as they had known in their Prussian homes, modified somewhat to suit the needs of their new physical environment.

They grouped themselves into small farm villages of from twenty to thirty families each. The houses, barns and stables, all under one roof, gable end facing the street, were located on both sides of a long wide street, soon lined with shade or fruit trees. The first buildings were made of mud walls with thatched roofs; but later substantial wooden, and even brick houses were constructed. Stretching out and away from the village in every direction over the treeless steppes were the arable farm lands; and the common pastures where the village cattle were herded; or sometimes the municipal sheep flocks were kept here until such time as the common land might be turned into grain fields as the growing population demanded. While each family was entitled to its hundred and seventy-five acres, the land was divided for practical use at first into a number of long, narrow strips so distributed among the farmers that all would share equally the good and bad land wherever there was a difference in its fertility. These strips were frequently redistributed. Women had no right to the common land; and the full estates could not be divided in their ownership, but had to pass by inheritance as a whole to the nearest male heir upon the death of the owner. In the Volga region title rested in the village; in South Russia in the head of the family.

The leading occupation during the early years was stock-raising, especially sheep breeding, dairying, and general farming. The silk industry in course of time assumed some importance in the two South Russian colonies where a large number of mulberry trees were planted. Bee culture, too, was given some attention. Fruit, especially watermelons, (Arbusen) found a ready market in the nearby cities. Later, with the advent of the railroad

and good markets on the Black Sea, wheat farming became a leading industry. Flax culture and weaving was also followed to some extent. Up to about 1830 farming methods were quite primitive. Wheat was cut by hand, and gathered into the barns or stacked outside. It was threshed in the late fall or winter with the flail, or by driving horses over it as it was scattered about over a smooth, hard, threshing floor. Later large, cylindrical threshing stones were drawn over the floor by horses. The grain was stored in the attic of the house, while the straw was used to thatch the roofs, or left to rot sufficiently to furnish fuel the following year for their large brick heating ovens.

After 1830, however, improved methods of farming were introduced, partly through the influence of a semi-official agricultural commission, voluntarily organized in the Molotschna colony but given government support, and of which a man by the name of Johan Cornies was the first president and chief promoter. Cornies remained its president from the beginning to the time of his death in 1848. His services to the colony were many and varied. He conducted many experiments and adopted many methods now well known in scientific agriculture. He was known far and wide as an agricultural expert, being frequently visited by government officials, including both Alexander I and Alexander II. Similar societies were later formed in other colonies, and their service was not confined to the Mennonite settlements, but they influenced neighboring Jewish, Russian and Tartar colonies to better farming. Among the results secured through the efforts of this organization were the planting of numerous trees, especially mulberry trees for the silk industry; the four year rotation of crops; the breeding of improved strains of stock; and the building of model school houses and practical farm buildings. The poorer colonists were induced to seek service with the more prosperous. Neglected children were provided for; and the organization was even influential in securing regulations compelling the lazy to work. The administration of the schools was finally turned over to the society also. In some of the colonies the association functioned up to the recent war.

While these colonies were not communistic in their organization, yet the villages frequently undertook municipal enterprises for the common good. Some villages had a common granary stored with grain for the lean years, and for the benefit of the poor. Occasionally also they held tracts of land for later distribution as the population grew. In 1820 the municipal sheep flock of the Old colony consisted of 1,000 Merinos, while the income from the municipal ferry across the Dnieper was from two to three thousand rubles annually. The municipal distillery also netted a substantial profit for the common treasury that year.

Aided by the Agricultural Society, both the main colonies maintained a steady economic growth; and in course of time converted the vast treeless steppes into flourishing fields, orchards, and pastures filled with herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. By 1870 both Chortitz and Molotschna as well as many of the large private estates outside of the settlements had accumulated wealth far above that of their Russian neighbors.² The Volga colonies were still in the pioneer stage, and did not share the same prosperity. The Swiss in Volhynia, however, were also fairly well to do; but the Polish Mennonites had not kept pace with others in their pursuit of either material or cultural advancement. These latter all came to America virtually as paupers.

Even the most prosperous settlements, however, were not without their economic problems. Population pressure by 1870 had become a serious question both in Chortitz and Molotschna. For some years in the beginning both colonies occupied more land than they could cultivate, the surplus being held as common pasture or meadow land, or sometimes let out to large farmers. Up to 1840 there seemed no dearth of tillable soil. But as already seen population increase was unusually rapid; and besides, the original agreement that no farm or full estate of sixty-five desiatines could be divided upon the death of the owner soon began to bear fruit in the development of a landless class. Like the medieval fief the estate must remain intact, and pass to but one member of the family by inheritance, though not by primogeni-

²See Smith "*Mennonites of America*", footnote page 326.

ture. Other members of the family thus must secure land elsewhere, work as farm laborers, or take up other lines of effort. After all the available estates had been distributed in the two colonies, the number of landless grew rapidly. By 1870 a large part of the population in both Chortitz and Molotschna owned no land.

A solution of this problem was sought quite early in the purchase of daughter colonies as an outlet for the surplus population. Thus Chortitz as early as 1836 purchased a site for the Bergthal colony; the Molotschna settlement a little later made similar purchases. Sometimes wealthy farmers bought individual farms outside the colonies. Occasionally, too, groups of settlers would locate as renters on the private estates of noblemen. Cornies sought a remedy in encouraging the manufacturing industry in the larger towns, which would furnish employment for those out of work on the farms.

To make matters worse, the landless had no voice in finding a remedy for this situation. The practice of keeping the entire estate intact was a government regulation. And only such as owned land had a vote in the local assemblies where all land as well as other policies were determined. Too often the landholders used their monopoly to their own advantage. Surplus land which was the property of the entire colony, and which might have been divided up into farms to meet the demand of the landless, was often leased to rich landlords instead, at a ridiculously low rent for sheep raising, thus forcing many of the poor to seek farms far out from the settlement. No help could be expected from the ministers either; for since the ministry was not salaried they were chosen too frequently with an eye to their financial standing, and thus their interests were with the landowners.

This condition naturally bred a great deal of discontent, and ran a dividing line through the population on the basis of land ownership, often cutting through the ties of domestic and social kinship. The cleavage finally became so well defined that the landless organized, and in the early sixties petitioned the Russian government for relief. Their program demanded the distribu-

tion of the common land; a division of the large estates into smaller ones when desirable with voting provisions; and the purchase by each colony of new lands for the benefit of the landless. After considerable opposition on the part of the landed interests, and of the usual procrastination on the part of the Russian authorities, a measure of relief was finally granted by the Government. It was recommended that the large estates where necessary might be divided into half and even quarter estates of $32\frac{1}{2}$ and $16\frac{1}{4}$ dessiatines respectively; that the surplus common land be divided into these smaller estates; that the broad highways leading from one village to another be made narrower, and the income from the sale of this land be invested in behalf of the landless; and finally that the owners of small estates be given the same voting rights in the local assemblies as the large farmers.

These measures brought some relief. By 1867 there were 425 full estates, 296 half, and 51 quarter estates in Chortitz and Bergthal. In the Molotschna settlement there were 1,200 full, and 322 half estates. This relief, together with the development of manufacturing in the villages, the establishing of daughter colonies, and the exodus to America of a large part of the population saved the situation from serious consequences; but the land question was still an important issue up to the time of the recent war. The revolution of 1917, as is well known, solved the whole problem in Russia by a scheme of wholesale nationalization.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In local government the Mennonite as well as other German colonists were granted a wide latitude of choice in adopting such institutions as best suited their own needs. Each village became a governing unit for the control of schools, roads and poor relief; for the appointment of municipal herders, fire overseers and village clerks; apportioning the arable farm lots and distributing surplus lands. At the head of each village was a magistrate called a *Schultz*, who was elected by the land owners, and had jurisdiction of petty misdemeanors. Local regulations on all these questions were passed by a town meeting composed of land holders

only. Those without real estate had no voice in local government. A group of villages, at first including the whole colony, composed a district called a *Gebiet*; and a superintendent called an *Oberschultz*, together with clerks and assistants, elected by the villages made up the *Gebietsamt* with power of corporal punishment, the right to hold court, and regulate such other matters of local government as concerned the villages in common. Chortitz and Molotschna each formed a separate district or *Gebiet*; but later Molotschna was divided into two—Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld.

Each colony kept its own records, made its own fire regulations, provided for an insurance fund, took care of its own delinquents as well as defectives, and even made its own laws of inheritance as well as many other local regulations which among their Russian neighbors were provided for by the government of the Czar. In fact the Mennonites with all their special exemptions and privileges almost constituted a democratic state within a larger autocratic state enjoying local autonomy far above the native Russian communities. It was an anomalous situation, and could not last indefinitely. They were hardly recognized as Russian citizens at all; some of them even going so far as to say that their political allegiance belonged to Prussia from whence they had emigrated a half century earlier.

The only direct political contact the colonists had with the Russian government at St. Petersburg was through a Commission (*Fuersorge-Komitee*), usually headed by a German, stationed at Odessa, and directed by the department of Interior. This commission, which had supervision of all the German colonies of South Russia, was organized by the Russian government in 1818, after several other forms of control had ended in failure. Later on the Agricultural Commission in Molotschna was given a semi-official status with limited authority over agricultural and school matters. A similar society was also established in Chortitz. In the early seventies all these rights of local government were abolished among the German colonies which were then placed like other Russian communities under direct control of the St. Petersburg authorities.

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Being a strongly religious group, the Mennonites approached a theocracy in their form of government. The elders of the church, although in no way organically connected with the control of temporal affairs, yet as heads of the church exercised great influence over matters of government, especially in the case of schools which were closely affiliated with the church. The German president of the Odessa *Fuersorge-Komitee* consulted the elders on matters of local government quite as often as the magistrates. This practice necessitated frequent meetings of the elders out of which grew an institution known as Church Council (*Kirchen-Konvent*), whose chief business was supposedly ecclesiastical, but which nevertheless often concerned itself with questions which today would be clearly classed as civil in their nature. Laymen had no voice in these meetings. The elders thus acquired a position of great influence by virtue of their offices. In 1883 after the loss of the special political status which had been accorded to all German colonies up to the early seventies, these Church Councils were transformed into Church Conferences which confined their deliberations to strictly ecclesiastical matters.

Here we have a very rare and interesting example of Mennonite self-government based on the principle of passive resistance. The experiment was not always a success. It was not always easy to carry out the Mennonite doctrine of non-resistance and opposition to the use of force, and at the same time maintain the discipline necessary for a stable social order. To be sure all crimes were adjudicated by the larger Russian units of government; but to the Mennonite village magistrate fell the lot of administering local discipline which occasionally demanded a violation of their fundamental principle of non-resistance. That there was a strong sentiment among the Mennonites in favor of maintaining their historic and inherited principles is shown by the fact that although all the other local officers were held by men of their own faith, the office of local constable was always turned over to a non-Mennonite Russian who had no scruples on the matter of using force, usually some hired man or other day laborer in the farm village.

Differences of opinions in this matter resulted in the early twenties in one of the first church divisions.

Education, too, was entirely within the control of local Mennonite communities. Each village in the beginning was free to choose such schools as it desired, or none at all if it so wished. From the first, however, elementary schools were established in every village, mostly of the subscription type. Educational interest for a time was not high. Teachers were ill-prepared and poorly paid. Often they were worn-out old workmen, who converted their workshops into combination schools and workrooms with school desks and work benches side by side, and the rod and plane both within easy reach. Frequently the winter teacher also functioned as the summer herdsman, thus giving him an all-year job, which enabled him to eke out a scant existence. His chief task as a schoolmaster was to hear the children recite their lessons and to keep order. This usually gave him plenty of time to ply his real trade of carpenter, or shoemaker perhaps.

Progress naturally was slow. Several years were required to master the elements of the alphabet and the art of writing. With this accomplished, the school period for many closed. Those who remained longer might learn a little more of ciphering, ornamental writing perhaps, and memorize a few more Scripture verses. The primary aim of the whole system was to perpetuate the German language, and save the children for their fathers' religion. The curriculum, therefore, consisted of the three conventional R's with a fourth added—Religion; and also some attention given to singing. The dominant control was in the hands of the elders and ministers; but of effective supervision there was very little. The distinctive school furniture consisted of a long table through the center of the room, with the boys on one side, the girls on the other, and the teacher at one end. The rod was freely used as an incentive to good scholarship. When that failed, better results were occasionally secured by forcing the unruly child to kneel on peas, or by other methods equally obsolete and cruel. The teachers, with the exception of those that were imported from Prussia, had no special preparation for their work, and the medium of in-

struction was *Platt-Deutsch*. Under such a system it was inevitable that the second generation of Prussian immigrants should deteriorate both in general culture and in their spiritual ideals in their new home, a price that usually must be paid by pioneers for their pioneering.

There were always a few far-sighted men, however, and especially a few enthusiastic teachers who realized the need of keeping up higher educational standards. In the early twenties a group of these progressive men in the Molotschna founded a sort of continuation school at Ohrloff for the training of teachers. To the position of principal they called an experienced teacher from Prussia, Tobias Voth by name. For six years Voth enrolled an increasing number of students in his advanced classes. Evening classes, and reading circles were introduced for the benefit of those who were too busy to attend the day sessions of school. Besides other subjects, mission study was introduced in the curriculum. But Voth was ahead of his day; and for lack of support the association was forced to abandon its educational enterprise. Later he established private schools at Schoensee and Steinbach where for some years he continued efficient work as a teacher. In course of time Voth was succeeded as an educational leader in the Molotschna colony by Heinrich Heese, a member of the progressive Gnadenfeld congregation who encouraged especially the study of the Russian language which up to this time had been given little consideration in the Mennonite schools.

The chief promoter of the educational cause, however, in the Molotschna colony was Johan Cornies, the president of the Agricultural Commission already mentioned. Up to 1843 the St. Petersburg government had left the matter of education entirely in the hands of the local churches; but in that year this Commission was granted a limited jurisdiction by the government over the schools among the colonists. This authority Cornies utilized for the five remaining years of his official career in a somewhat arbitrary manner, but to the great improvement, nevertheless, of the educational standards of the colony. Among the reforms which he introduced were the erection of model school houses in each

village, and compulsory school attendance. Every teacher had to be licensed. Training schools and teachers conferences were established, both of which greatly increased the efficiency of the teaching force. Uniform textbooks were prescribed, and well-planned courses of study introduced.

In Chortitz similar progress was made. There, too, an Agricultural Commission, modelled after the one at Molotschna, was founded; and it, too, assumed some control over the schools of that colony. The Chortitz *Centralschule* founded in 1840, and the Gnadenfeld *Bruderschule* organized in 1857, as well as the Ohrloff *Vereinschule* in the Molotschna were all strong forces in elevating the educational and spiritual interests of both colonies. In 1859 all these institutions received government recognition as proper schools for training Mennonite teachers. After the Agricultural Commission ceased to function the schools again fell under the control of the church elders. But the work done by these various agencies had placed the educational interests of the Mennonite colonies upon a firm basis; so that by 1870 Mennonite schools were superior to those of the other German colonies, and far above the native Russian system. By 1881 all the German colonists lost their special school and political privileges; after that, school administration was completely taken over by the Russian government.

The spiritual development of the colonists during the first half of the century hardly kept pace with their material growth. The first settlers from Prussia brought with them ecclesiastical divisions that harked back even to their homes in Holland in the sixteenth century; and admission from one branch to another was possible only through rebaptism. To these imported divisions several new ones were soon added. The close affiliation of the church with the temporal authorities in administering local government had its usual result. As in the State churches in the pre-Reformation days, church membership was likely to be confused with rights of citizenship; for according to their special charter, the Mennonites in order to enjoy their privileges and exemptions in the Empire, had to be members of the organization with which

the original contract had been made. Church membership was therefore essential to the enjoyment of highly desirable civil privileges. Membership thus came to be regarded as a matter of course, and was no longer based on actual conversion. Everybody joined church at a certain age.

To be sure a strict discipline was maintained; and gross sins as well as slight deviations from the established rules were punishable with the church ban. Some of the more conservative groups added another means of discipline in connection with the ban, a practice called "Avoidance" which by demanding all social and business ostracism as well as all severing of religious fellowship between one excommunicated and the rest of the church body, practically cut off the victim from earning a living within the community, and was a rather sure remedy for bringing him to repentance. This gave the elders unusual power over the economic and social well-being of the whole community, as well as over the religious faith of their members.

Not every village had a meeting house. Some large congregations like Alexanderwohl, Bergthal and many others included many villages. Meeting houses, however, were usually quite centrally located, and in the villages where there were no special houses of worship religious meetings were often held in the school buildings. These church houses were without tower or bell, and severely plain, like the dress of the worshippers. Services were held in the forenoon; sermons were often read from manuscript in a monotonous tone; there was little attempt at finished oratory or originality of thought. Ministers were elected or chosen by lot from the laity, without training, though frequently from among the village teachers or men of some wealth; and served without pay.

In course of time, however, new currents of spiritual life made themselves evident in different parts of the settlements. As early as 1830 a number of small groups throughout the two colonies, influenced by religious literature from the outside, opposed the assumption by the church of temporal power, and desiring a more fervid type of spiritual church life than that which pre-

vailed at the time, banded themselves together into a new organization to which they finally gave the name *Kleine Gemeinde*.

Some time later, in the sixties, a strong evangelical movement again fostered from the outside swept through the colonies resulting in the formation of another division called the "Mennonite Brethren."

The church authorities fought both these movements with all their power. Since the Mennonites were granted their early civil and religious privileges as an organic body, those not members of this body could of course not participate in these privileges. Consequently such small groups as might wish to sever their ecclesiastical connection with the main body of the church, would likewise endanger the special rights which they enjoyed under the name Mennonite. For years the elders left no stone unturned in their efforts to prevent the new bodies from securing the recognition of the Russian government which would reserve for them their old rights under a separate organization. Their efforts were fruitless, however. Both the *Bruedergemeinde*, and the *Kleine Gemeinde* became separate ecclesiastical bodies, and retained their rights as Mennonites.

Notwithstanding all these dissensions and inconsistencies, however, Mennonites of all shades of belief remained staunch defenders of the fundamental principles of non-resistance, opposition to the oath, opposition to war, and the demand for consistent living, even though they found it difficult sometimes to enforce their doctrines and beliefs.

It will thus be observed from the above resume of the peculiar local institutions which prevailed among the Mennonites of Russia that they formed a distinct and compact group within the Empire, separated from the natives by social and political as well as religious barriers, and held firmly together as a group by ties of language, religion, racial pride, consciousness of a superior culture, and by special political and civil privileges. Of marriage affiliations with the native Russians there was none whatever. All this made them a veritable state within a state.

It can readily be seen that this was an anomalous situation,

and could not last forever. Under the dominion of a Czar, discrimination might be possible. Under an autocracy favored groups might be granted privileges above those of the other subjects of the realm; but democracy being a great leveller would ultimately demand the abolition of all such group distinctions. And so the decision of the Czar in 1870 to put an end to the highly privileged status of his German colonists was both inevitable and logical, thoroughly in keeping with the growing democracy of the times. But it came sooner than the colonists had expected.

The determination of the Czar to inaugurate a policy of universal military service, abolishing the exemptions enjoyed by his non-Russian subjects heretofore, and to thoroughly Russianize his German as well as other foreigners living within his realm was largely the result of the growing spirit of the militarism of the times and especially the unification of the German Empire in 1871. At any rate the program of Russianization proposed at this time was thorough-going and far reaching. It included not only the abolition of all military exemptions, but complete government control of the school systems in the colonies, the Russian language instead of the German as a medium of instruction, abolition of the special German *Fuersorge-Komitee* at Odessa, in return for direct governmental control of the German colonies in local affairs from St. Petersburg. In short, the days of special privileges were to close; and all Germans were to become full-fledged Russians.

LOSS OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGES

It is needless to say that the Mennonites were greatly disturbed by these rumors of the possible loss of their peculiar privileges within the Empire. Opposition to war was such a fundamental part of their faith, and the use of the German language and control of their schools was so vitally bound up with their whole religious system that the least infringement upon their freedom of choice in all these matters was regarded as a direct attack upon the religious liberties which they thought had been granted them in perpetuity, and for which they were willing to suffer persecu-

tion if need be. They had every reason to believe, however, that the special concessions granted them in 1786 unconditionally would be confirmed in any new military service program that might be adopted if only the Czar's government could be reminded of the special terms under which they had settled on the steppes of southern Russia.

Accordingly as early as March of 1871 delegates from the various colonies—Molotschna, Chortitz, Volga, Volhynia, and the Huterite settlements appeared at St. Petersburg in behalf of their common cause. Through the president of the Odessa *Fuersorge-Komitee*, who happened to be in the capital just at this time, the delegation secured an audience with the Imperial Council. Neither Elder Suderman, the spokesman of the Molotschna party, nor Elder Dueck, of Chortitz, was able to speak the language of the country, a short-coming which the president of the Council was not slow to criticize. A few days later the delegation also obtained an interview with the special commission which had been appointed to draft the new military law. Here they were informed by Count Heyden, president of the commission, that although some consideration would be given to their scruples against war, yet it was not likely that the proposed law would exempt them entirely. Some sort of non-combatant service in the Sanitary or Hospital or similar departments would no doubt be demanded of the Mennonites. Upon being informed by Elder Suderman that the Mennonites could not conscientiously accept non-combatant service if such service were connected with the military department of the government, the Count replied that in that case emigration might be the only way out of their dilemma; but suggested, nevertheless, that the delegates return home with the assurance that their consciences would not be violated in the proposed changes.

One of the members of the commission during this interview, to whom non-resistance was a strange doctrine, asked Suderman how he would defend himself against an enemy in case of attack. "I would approach him," replied Suderman, "extend my hand, and embrace him, but would not kill him"; a reply which it

is said greatly amused the commissioner, even though it may not have greatly enlightened him. Another stock argument which Count Heyden advanced against the views held by the Mennonite absolutists was that if all people were pacifists such as the Mennonites an orderly state government would be an impossibility, since it would soon be overrun by its enemies. To this argument delegate Epp, a school teacher from the Chortitz colony, replied that if all men were like the Mennonites in this respect there would be no need to defend the state against its enemies at all, since there would be no enemies, to which the Count of course had to agree.

Although both the council and the commission received the delegation in the most friendly spirit, yet neither could give a definite answer to the Mennonite petition for total exemption from military service, except the suggestions that in all probability some sort of non-combatant service with or without the use of weapons would be required. Thinking that an interview with the Czar himself, the *Landesvater* would bring better results, the delegates desired to lay their case before him, in person; but their efforts in this direction were of no avail, since the authorities did not permit the meeting. Two of the delegates, however, Isaac and Epp, managed one morning to have just a few words with the Czar as they met him on his stroll through his summer garden. But the interview brought no results, being very brief and consisting of little more than a question by the Czar as to whether they were Mennonites from the province of Taurien and their reply in the affirmative.

This first attempt of the Mennonites to get a favorable hearing for their cause before the St. Petersburg authorities, it will thus be seen, was not very satisfactory. The delegates returned to their homes without definite assurances as to the future; but with a growing conviction that their privileged days were numbered.

Still hoping that a personal appeal to the Czar might ward off the threatened loss of their special status, a second delegation, taking advantage of the Czar's visit to his winter residence at

Jalta in the Crimea, attempted an interview with him at that place in January of 1872. In this attempt they again failed, however; for the Governor General who had promised to arrange the meeting for them unfortunately fell sick just at this time, and was unable to carry out his part of the program. But they met the Crown Prince, Constantin, who to their great surprise addressed them in German, and informed them that he knew the Mennonite villages in South Russia well, having visited among them some years earlier. But he, too, assured them that while every effort would be made in the forthcoming law to meet the religious scruples of the Mennonites, they would undoubtedly be required to perform some sort of non-combatant service under the new arrangement. This delegation, too, returned greatly disappointed, more convinced than ever that emigration would be inevitable for such as insisted upon the unconditional preservation of their former liberties.

Two later delegations were sent to St. Petersburg in the interests of total exemption, one in February, 1873, and the other in the fall of the same year. But in neither of these did the delegates succeed in obtaining a personal interview with the Czar; nor in securing the desired concession in the new military law. The only result of these various visits to St. Petersburg thus far was the final determination of the Czar to announce the definite provisions in the forthcoming conscription act for exempting the Mennonites from combatant service. To this end he sent General von Todtleben, a well known general of the Crimean War, and of German extraction, through the Mennonite settlements in the spring of 1874 to explain in detail the provisions of the act as it concerned them, and to turn them from their decision to leave Russia. By this time, however, the emigration movement had already gained considerable momentum, and Todtleben's efforts were only partially successful.

In the meantime the Mennonite absolutists throughout the various colonies, that is, such as refused to accept any form of limited service under the military authorities even though it may have been non-combatant, were casting about for a suitable refuge

in case emigration should become inevitable. Australia, Turk-estan, South America, North America, all suggested themselves as possibilities. But to each there were some objections. Especially interesting for us is the popular impression that prevailed among them at the time of our own western America. In the words of Leonard Suderman "America was a country interesting for the adventurer, an asylum for convicts. How could one live in peace under his vine and fig tree amid such people, to say nothing of the native savages." Such a life might be possible, he continues, "for those who had their pockets full of revolvers; but for a non-resistant people it would be impossible to found homes amid such surroundings." And besides all this, there was the long voyage across the Atlantic, the loss of much valuable property in case a considerable number should decide to emigrate, the severing of ties of home and country—all these considerations weighed heavily upon the minds of those who loved their own beautiful homes and their pleasant surroundings, but who at the same time were willing to forego these temporal pleasures in order to maintain the faith of their fathers. With many of them religious conviction won, and even with all the wild rumors of the dangers among the savages along our western frontier, America became the choice of practically all who decided to emigrate³.

³The Mennonite population in Russia at this time was approximately 45,000. A little over one-third of the entire population emigrated to America.

III.

SPYING OUT THE PROMISED LAND

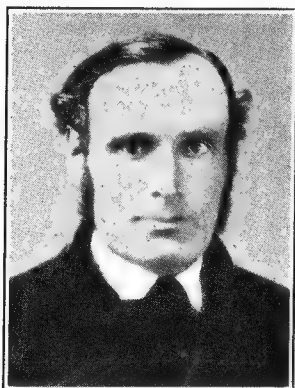
Among the far-sighted men who first realized that emigration would be the only alternative left for such as could not accept the terms offered by the Czar's government was Cornelius Jansen, a merchant in the city of Berdiansk, and at one time Prussian consul at that seaport. Jansen, because of his official position and his more intimate knowledge of political affairs, was better able than were his brethren to gauge the signs of the times. From the very first he preferred America to all the other lands of freedom as the probable asylum for such as might wish to emigrate. As early as the summer of 1871 he began a correspondence with J. F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana, who as editor of the *Herold der Wahrheit* was known more or less among the European Mennonites. Jansen inquired especially about the resources and industries of the different sections of the country, the customs of the people, and above all about the laws regarding military service. At the same time, too, he wrote to the English Colonial Secretary at London inquiring whether Mennonite immigrants would be welcome in Canada, and if so, whether they would be free from military service. The Secretary replied that while Canada would welcome the Mennonites, yet the English government did not wish to encourage the emigration movement unless the Mennonites could leave Russia with the full consent of their government. This inquiry of Jansen's together with a report of the proposed Mennonite migration from the English Consul at Berdiansk, a friend of Jansen's, the Secretary sent to the Dominion government at Ottawa.

The Ottawa authorities also learned of the proposed emigration at about the same time from another source. William Hespeler, a Canadian immigration agent, of German birth, but resident at Winnipeg, while on a visit to his old home in Baden in the

summer of 1872, learned from Count Menchikof of southern Russia that a large number of Mennonites were considering emigrating to North America. This information, too, was immediately forwarded by him to the Canadian Immigration Department. The Department of the Interior ever on the lookout during these years for desirable settlers for their newly created western province, Manitoba, requested an opinion from the Privy Council on the question raised by Jansen in his letter to the Colonial Secretary. The Privy Council informed the Minister of the Interior that according to the laws already on the statute books Mennonites were assured absolute immunity from military service in Canada. The Minister thereupon authorized Hespeler, who was still in Germany, to proceed to southern Russia and assure the Mennonites of a hearty welcome to Canada. Hespeler spent some time in the fall of this year visiting the various Mennonite settlements of South Russia, but the purpose of his visit being suspected by the Russian police, he was forced to return. In a meeting in November, however, at Odessa with the Bergthal and Molotschna representatives he suggested that they appoint a delegation of competent men to investigate the lands in Canada, which might be suitable for the kind of settlement they desired. This advice was followed the next year. From this time on Hespeler was the representative of the Canadian government in everything that was connected with the immigration of the Russian Mennonites to Canada and their settlement upon their chosen lands.

In the meantime during this same summer of 1872 a company of four young men from the Molotschna colony had set out on an adventure of their own through our western states. Three of these young men, hardly more than boys, Bernhard Warkentin, Philip Wiebe, and Peter Dyck, were sons of well-to-do native parents, while the fourth, Jacob Boehr, was a native of the Palatinate who had spent some time in the Molotschna, and because of his more mature age of some thirty years and wider experience as a traveller was invited by these others to accompany them on this western tour. Boehr was undoubtedly the leader of the party, and being himself a Palatine it was natural that in America he

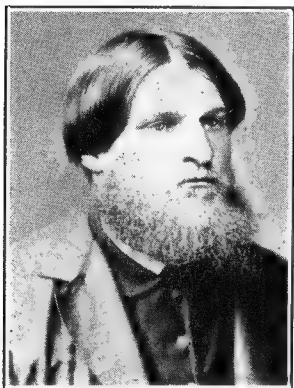
MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF TWELVE



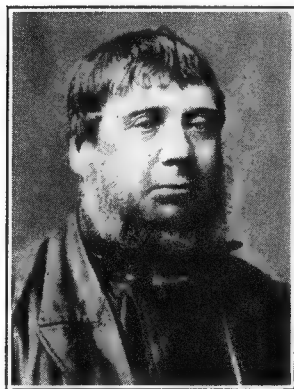
Wilhelm Ewert



Leonhard Suderman



Paul Tschetter



Tobias Unruh

should make the Palatine congregation at Summerfield, Illinois, their headquarters from which they made a number of land excursions through the western states during the summer and fall. After travelling through a number of the frontier states, and visiting several of the centers of the American Mennonite communities in the middle west and Pennsylvania, three of this group returned to Russia to report on what they had seen. The fourth, Warkentin, remained at Summerfield and two years later followed a number of Summerfielders to Halstead, Kansas, where he eventually became a successful miller, and also became prominently identified with the whole immigration movement. During the fall of 1872, together with J. Y. Schantz, he also toured Manitoba at the request of the Canadian government. The results of this tour of investigation written up by Schantz and submitted by him to the Department of the Interior was printed as an official report on the resources of Manitoba by the Ottawa government. The favorable report of our western lands carried back to Russia by this company of young men, no doubt added considerable impetus to the emigration movement, and more especially to the decision to send an official delegation from the various colonies to spy out the promised land more fully.

At any rate, in the spring of 1873 such communities as had a considerable number of prospective emigrants chose official delegates who were to make a tour of investigation through western America with a view of finding a suitable place for a large settlement. The Molotschna colony selected Elder Jacob Buller of the Alexanderwohl congregation, and Elder Leonhard Suderman of Berdiansk. The congregations near Ostrog, Volhynia and Poland agreed upon Elder Tobias Unruh. The Swiss group in Volhynia was represented by a layman, Andreas Schrag. These four left South Russia in the middle of April, and after stopping enroute in West Prussia where they were joined by Wilhelm Ewert who represented several Prussian congregations which were also interested in the proposed emigration, took passage on the *Frisia*, and landed in New York the latter part of May. The Berghthal colony selected one of their ministers, Heinrich Wiebe, and their

Oberschultz, Jacob Peters, to represent them. These, together with Cornelius Buhr, a farmer on a large estate, who accompanied the delegates at his own expense, left their home in late February and sailed on the *Silesia*, landing at Montreal by way of Halifax some weeks earlier than the Molotschna group. The delegates of the *Kleine Gemeinde* at Borsenko, Elder Cornelius Toebs and David Klaasen, together with the Huterite representatives, Paul and Lawrence Tschetter, arrived at New York on the *Silesia* in early May.

These three groups travelled independently of each other during the first stages of their journey through the Mennonite settlements in the East. The Bergthal delegates being the first to arrive spent a short time in Berlin, Canada, and then travelling west investigated the prairie lands of Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado and Texas. Both of the other groups also stopped off with the eastern Mennonites, some in Pennsylvania and others in Canada. All came through Elkhart, Indiana, and Chicago. It was agreed before hand that all the groups were to meet at St. Paul, Minnesota, but the reunion took place at Fargo, Dakota, the head of navigation on the Red river, on June 9, from which place they were to travel as one party on a tour of inspection through Manitoba and the northern states in the United States. By this time also they were accompanied by William Hespeler, the representative of the Canadian government, and Jacob Y. Schantz, representative of the Ontario Mennonites, both loyal boosters for Canada; John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana; and the representatives of several railroad companies.

The frontier line of America in the early seventies, where cheap or free lands were still to be had in quantities for large settlements, ran from Winnipeg south through the Red river valley, across the southeastern corner of the territory of Dakota, through central Nebraska and Kansas down into Texas. This was the region, therefore, that our delegates were interested in. Some of the prospective colonists were well-to-do, but many were poor. They desired to live together. Consequently they were interested only in such regions where even the poorest might become pos-

sessed of some land. After spending several days inspecting the lands about Fargo, the entire party embarked on the steamboat "International" on a voyage of some four hundred miles down the Red river to Winnipeg from whence they were to make a tour through the province of Manitoba. This boat belonged to the Hudson Bay Company and had been opened to passenger service only a few years before. Since the International was one of the Red river boats that carried some eight thousand Russian Menonites down the river during the next few years it may not be entirely out of place to describe both the boat and a voyage down the Red river as it appeared to a traveller from eastern Canada in 1876. Describing the boat this traveller says:

The International is a vessel of the scow built, light water kind used on these waters, where in the dry season, the bottom often lies at twenty or thirty inches from the surface—scow built with round nose, propelled when floating by a horizontal wheel at the rear; and when stuck on the stones or mud, pulled off by a cable, one end of which is attached to a tree on the bank, the other to a capstan turned by the 'Nigger' engine. The vessel is the oldest of the Kitson line; in length one hundred and forty feet; in breadth, one-third of the length; three decked—the lowest for freight engine, deck passengers, cattle, etc.; the second with cabin, staterooms and covered promenade; the third has the wheelhouse and open deck. The crew consisted of thirty or more that worked the craft and the scows, which sometimes ran on in the more rapid current, but were more generally lashed to our side.

The river itself is a considerable stream of some seven hundred miles from its source in Minnesota to its entrance into Lake Winnipeg one hundred miles below the city of the same name. Its course winds through a level prairie of rich soil, straight north, but so crooked that the prow of the boat was headed toward the Antarctic circle almost as often as toward the Arctic, as though reluctant to continue its way toward the land of ice and snow. In depth it varied from five feet at the head of navigation to fifteen where it passes Winnipeg. A voyage down the stream

was interesting and the scenery beautiful. Continuing the description of the traveller mentioned above,

Willows sweep our side as she creeps on, hugging the banks for deeper water or to get room for the next turn. Nature has with lavish hand studded the banks for half our way with clusters of stately elms, ash, oak, maple, basswood, poplar and cottonwood, that spread their branches over a rich vegetation—long grass, wild plum and cherries, prairie roses, the white blossom of the white hop, wild tea, the winding convolvulus; the dark green ivy and grape vines hang from the trunks; clusters of pink squaw berries, Scotch thistles of great size; beautiful flowers of many varieties—purple, white and yellow—dot the green carpet. The lining of the prairies is of varying depths, from fifty or one hundred yards to a mile, and through it we may see the sky. The upper deck is generally on a level with the land, but sometimes, as at Frog point, the banks rise as high as the top of the smoke stack. during the numerous stoppages of the vessel we run up to view the land—see a rich meadow stretching before us.

The settlements along the river were sparse and were composed of Indians and half-breeds except in the two or three villages scattered along the banks near the boundary line on both sides.

Indians with their squaws and papooses of all ages, are sometimes seen on the banks—sometimes dressed as poor white men dress, but generally a blue or white blanket over their shoulders, hair long and unkempt, complexion very dark, figure generally of light build, and countenance of low expression. Here and there are a few cords of wood which squaws have cut and piled for sale to the passing steamboats. On one we see a 'buck' waving a blue blanket over his head as we approach, signalling his desire to effect a sale. Among the trees we see here and there the residences of this poor remnant of a brave nation; sometimes they are daubed with mud—more often the wigwam, conical in shape, is made of sail cloth or birch bark, supported on saplings ten feet high, not closed at the top, as the smoke from the fire within must get out there or by the door in front, which generally faces the river. Men of lighter though not less dirty hue are sometimes

visible with the red folk. These are half-breeds or more shortly 'Metis.' The growing town of Emerson whose wooden houses we see from the vessel, and the village of Whitehaven are passed, and the white settlers' cottages are often seen, log built, plastered with mud and thatched with the long blue joint hay of the prairie, which is said to wear as well as shingles.

The voyage continued through night and day, and the night scene was even more charming than that in the daytime.

As night grows on, a great reflecting lamp is set on either side of the prow to light the way. Beautiful and strange is the sight as the lamps throw their white weird light on the weeping willows, clinging vines, and shadowy poplars which we pass—like a theatric show with ever shifting scenes. The moon sails above and below each bank the varying panorama is reflected in the water. The wheelhouse rose on the upper deck. Its roof was a favorite vantage ground from which on clear evenings to look on the glorious sunset of the prairie, of a varied beauty and magnificence surpassing description.

Such were the scenes that met the gaze of our eager land-seekers as they continued their four days' voyage down the Red river in the forepart of the beautiful month of June in 1873. One of these days fell on a Sunday. Being strict observers of the Sabbath, the committee secured the consent of the captain through the influence no doubt of Hespeler, to hold a religious service on the deck. After the passengers had all been gathered together by Hespeler an English hymn was sung after which John F. Funk led in prayer, nearly all the passengers kneeling. Then Funk preached a sermon which Suderman, from whose account *Deputationsreise* the following information is largely taken, says was "not a short one" in a "loud and earnest voice." Suderman and Ewert then followed in German. Between the addresses they sang an appropriate hymn *Was kann es Schoeneres geben*. During the entire service the machinery of the boat was stopped, a courtesy on the part of the captain which made a favorable impression upon the delegates.

Upon their arrival in Winnipeg, Hespeler arranged for a

meeting with the Provincial officials. First of all, he introduced Schantz and Suderman to the Governor, who after an interview with them invited them to call again after they had finished their investigation of the available lands in Manitoba. A little later the entire company were introduced to the ministry, when according to Suderman's account they all drank to the health of Queen Victoria, which the Attorney General remarked was quite an appropriate act for Germans, since the Queen herself was a German, and her daughter was married to the heir to the German Crown. The spokesman for the ministry called attention to the mineral and agricultural wealth of the province, and the prospects of opening a shipping point at Thunder Bay, on Lake Superior, not over four hundred and fifty miles away. Five teams and light wagons with camp equipment for twenty-four persons were provided by the Minister of Public Works for a tour through a government reservation of eight townships of uninhabited prairie land some forty miles southeast of the city of Winnipeg.

Manitoba at this time was still almost a primeval prairie wilderness. It was only three years since the Canadian government had bought out the rights of the Hudson Bay Company to the territory, and had organized it into a province. At that time, in 1870, the entire white population scarcely exceeded one thousand people, scattered about a few trading posts along the Red and Assiniboine, and Lake Winnipeg. A few French traders at Portage la Prairie some seventy miles away occupied the farthest outpost to the west. The great bulk of the population consisted of half-breeds, with a smaller number of pure Indians. Liberal homestead laws began to attract settlers in increasing numbers; but at the time our delegates made this tour there were scarcely more than six hundred homesteaders in the entire province. Ducks, geese and other wild fowl were found in great numbers, and occasionally black bear and antelope. But the buffalo had migrated farther west, where annual hunts were still organized by the inhabitants of the province.

Winnipeg, an Indian name meaning "dirty water," in 1871 was a village of nineteen houses, and less than five hundred people.

Nearby was Fort Garry. The nearest railroad was over four hundred miles away, although the Canadian Pacific had surveyed several routes from Lake Superior, and within a few years built the first road to the city. The only means of entrance at this time was by way of the Red river from the south, or by way of a combined land and water route from Lake Superior on the east called the Dawson route. On the Red river, boats had been plying back and forth for several years from Winnipeg to Moorehead, the head of navigation. A railroad from Moorehead to Duluth completed the connection with Lake Superior. This was the usual course taken by nearly all the immigrants from eastern Canada. One serious objection to this gateway into Manitoba on the part of patriotic Canadians was that it lay almost entirely within United States territory. An all-Canadian way, called the Dawson route, which ran from Thunder Bay on Lake Superior, along the Rainy river, through Lake of the Woods and then overland direct to Winnipeg, covering a distance all-told of over five hundred miles, was subsidized by the Canadian government for several years; but the cost and inconveniences of the many changes required at the numerous portages of this combination land and waterway were so great that the project had to be abandoned. The building of the Canadian Pacific soon also made it unnecessary. None of the eight thousand Mennonites went over the Dawson route, although J. Y. Schantz, who took a keen personal interest in everything that pertained to the Mennonite immigration prided himself in later years on the fact that he had saved at least one party of immigrants from being routed this way by the Canadian Immigration officials.

The fact that Manitoba was still an unsettled prairie wilderness was by no means an objection to it, on the part of our Mennonite delegates. On the contrary that was just the kind of land they were looking for. In Russia the Mennonite colonies were living in large compact land areas, in closed communities, the land originally being uninhabited Crown lands at the time of purchase. They desired to reproduce the same kind of settlements in America. This would be possible only in such frontier regions where

the government still owned large areas of uninhabited stretches of land. In fact most of the delegates were instructed by their Russian constituencies as to the conditions under which they were to enter into land agreements. The instructions to the Molotschna delegates were quite exacting. If possible they were to secure the following guarantees from the governments from whom they purchased land.

1. Religious freedom, and exemption from military service.
2. Land of good quality, and in quantity sufficient to meet their needs; at a moderate price, and on easy terms.
3. The right to live in closed communities, with their own form of local government; and the use of the German language as they had been permitted to practice it in Russia.
4. To be desired, but not insisted upon, advance of sufficient money to cover transportation expenses from Russia to America, as it had already been offered in Canada.

These demands may seem rather extravagant if viewed from the standpoint of present day conditions. But at that time every western state, as well as a number of railroad companies still held vast areas of rich land anxiously awaiting industrious settlers, and the Mennonites of South Russia were known as among the most successful farmers of Europe. To secure some forty thousand such industrious farmers, according to the current reports of the time, for our western frontiers was regarded as a worthy undertaking. The fact that the Canadian government actually met all these demands is evidence ample of the keen interest taken in the settlement of our western lands.

As indicated above, the first tour of inspection took our delegates some forty miles southeast of Winnipeg where the Government held eight townships of land in reserve northeast of the Rat river. The party left Winnipeg on the eighteenth of June.

The season being rainy, and the trails across the prairie poor, their progress over the wet prairie was slow. During the first day they lost their way and had to retrace their steps. The first night was spent at a Hudson Bay trading post. The next day better progress was made, but the delegates were not favorably impressed by the vast stretches of what appeared almost like swamp land as a suitable home for their brethren. Here in the middle of June when in Russia the grain was about ready for harvest, in Manitoba the ground would not be ready even for seeding. That night they spent on the northeastern corner of the reservation, where they put up their tents on the wet ground; and by throwing damp grass into the campfire succeeded in keeping away the mosquitoes long enough to drink their tea in comfort and finish their supper. Before retiring for the night they sang several familiar German hymns—the first time no doubt since the dawn of history that white men ever broke the stillness of the prairie night with sounds of praise to their Maker in all that region. In their tents they fell upon their knees and thanked God for His protecting kindness. For two more days they picked their way through the watery waste, visiting a few lone settlers along the outskirts of the reservation, where they observed in the distance small groves of poplar and pine, fighting mosquitoes every minute of the time, both night and day. Before they had traversed half the distance of the reserved townships they decided to return to Winnipeg, and several of the delegates at least concluded they had quite enough of Manitoba—the Tschetters, Ewert, and Unruh. That very night, June 21, accompanied by J. F. Funk, and Michael Hiller of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, they took the boat up the Red river for Dakota. Suderman, however, and the rest agreed to spend several days more in inspecting a reservation west of Winnipeg. The next day was Sunday, and Suderman who was undoubtedly one of the leading spirits in the party, together with Schantz visited a Methodist church in the village which the former calls a “friendly” church. Among the things which he noticed as worthy of special mention were the fact that men and women sat together, the pulpit rested upon a raised plat-

form, the church had an organ, and beside him in the same seat sat a squaw. The service made a favorable impression upon him.

Two days later Hespeler and Schantz together with the remainder of the delegation left on their western tour. They followed a well-worn cart trail which paralleled the Assiniboine westward to the land of the Indian and buffalo. For a week they followed this trail, ever keeping in sight of the Assiniboine with its fringe of poplar, ash, oak and willow. Occasionally they passed through a trading post with a few houses such as White Horse Plains, Poplar Point, and finally Portage about seventy miles to the west. Everywhere they carefully examined the soil, and occasionally interviewed a lonely homesteader along the way. The soil seemed fertile with from one to two feet of black humus. At Poplar Point Suderman measured a field of timothy with heads four and one-half inches in length. A little beyond they stopped to examine two sections owned by Schantz and Hespeler respectively, given them no doubt by the Canadian government in return for their services in directing the Mennonite immigration in that direction. A homesteader near Schantz' section told them that the previous year his wheat averaged twenty-four bushels to the acre. Another man said that one year the average was thirty-nine bushels. From Portage the route led along the Rat creek and across White Mud river to the reserved lands along the southwestern corner of Lake Manitoba.

By this time, however, Suderman and Buller, the Molotschna delegates, were also convinced that Manitoba would not satisfy their constituents, and so on June 27, separating from the rest of the party, and accompanied by J. Y. Schantz they retraced their way back to Winnipeg, ready to join the rest of the delegation in Dakota. This left only the Bergthal and Klein Gemeinde groups, who seemingly had decided on Canada as a place for their settlement. Accompanied by Hespeler, these latter continued their investigation as far west as the Riding Mountain region. These two groups representing the poorer and more conservative settlements in Russia were no doubt especially impressed by the free lands in Manitoba as well as by the absolute guarantee of military

exemption: both of these conditions being less favorable in the United States than in Canada.

On their way back to Winnipeg along the main cart trail the Suderman party met a number of two-wheel ox carts loaded with pelts from the western country some six hundred miles away, and driven by half-breeds from the same region. Eastern immigrants they met also who coming by the Red river route had stopped at Fargo to purchase oxen at \$150 per span, and work wagons for \$75. Being the only highway to the western country it was along this region that the first settlements were made. On July 1, Dominion day, the party embarked for Fargo. Suderman says that they left Manitoba just at the time when the roses were in their fullest bloom, and smiling upon the travellers everywhere along the roadside, in the forests and under the shrubs; and when the early sown grain was just beginning to come into head. The voyage up the river except for the presence of the mosquito was a pleasant one. Four days later, on another national holiday, the boat landed at Grand Forks where it stopped for an hour. Several of the delegates took advantage of the brief stop to visit a farmer near the dock. The soil here was very rich. The oats in an oatfield was so tall that the slightest storm would lodge it. A potato patch which had been planted only four weeks before was already in bloom, at which they were greatly astonished. Corn and cabbage grew luxuriantly. They were especially delighted at the sight of big luscious cucumbers and watermelons—two favorite articles of diet among the Russian Mennonites. Sunday morning, July 6, at three o'clock the whistle on the boat reminded the voyagers that they had reached Fargo; but several of the party had been driven out of their berths an hour before by the mosquitoes.

In the meantime, the Hespeler party, while on their way back from Riding Mountain, met with an experience at White Horse Plains, about thirty miles out from Winnipeg which might have resulted disastrously not only for members of the party but for the entire immigration movement to Canada. On July 1, Dominion day, when everybody was celebrating more or less, several half-

breeds fell into a quarrel with the driver of the party. The quarrel resulted in personal injury to one of the half-breeds. The latter seeking vengeance, gathered up a number of his drunken friends and drove the party of delegates to cover in a tavern at White Horse Plains. All night they tried to break into the room where the delegates had taken refuge, while Hespeler with pistol and sword stood guard at the door. A messenger had been dispatched to Winnipeg in the meantime, and the next day a troop of cavalry came to the relief of the besieged party. The ring leaders of the attack were arrested and brought to Winnipeg for trial where several of them were duly punished for their part in the disturbance. The affair aroused considerable interest among the Government officials, not only because it was thought that it might endanger the proposed immigration of Mennonites, but also because it was at first thought to be a repetition of a half-breed revolt against the Manitoban government similar to the one several years before under the leadership of the rebel, Louis Riehl. Had the delegates received serious injury at this time it is not at all unlikely that Canada would have received but few of the immigrants during the following years. As it was, however, in spite of this unpleasant experience, the Bergthal and Kleine-Ge-meinde delegates had both decided to recommend Manitoba to their brethren for settlement. Since they had already toured the United States it only remained for them now to proceed to Ottawa and make the final arrangements for the immigration of their constituencies the following year.

To return to Fargo. Since the first party which left Manitoba on July 21 had already been in Dakota for a week, and was ready to proceed farther, Suderman and his friends, Buller and Schrag, spent only a few days in Dakota after their arrival at Fargo. Accompanied by Hiller of the Northern Pacific, and a representative of the Dakota Land department, the whole party spent several days west and south of Fargo along the Maple and Rush rivers. They were well impressed with the black soil here which was of a two-foot depth. On all sides there was a luxuriant growth of grass; and the prairies were covered with a veri-

table carpet of roses, dark red, light and pink, sweet-smelling flowers of all kinds; raspberries, gooseberry shrubs and grape vines growing wild everywhere. Those in charge of the expedition had made ample provision for the comfort and appetites of the delegates. Comfortable sleeping tents were provided, and a negro cook to look after the culinary needs of the party. For supper the first night on the prairie they had roast beef, potatoes, bread, butter, hominy, pudding, pie, and good coffee, which was so good that Suderman asked for a third cup which he says so pleased the negro cook that he laughed outright.

Having spent several days on the prairies near Fargo, the party left that point on July 16 for Breckenridge on the Minnesota side. They left by Stagecoach, drawn by four *Schimmel*, and arrived at their destination in the evening of the same day. Here they were met by Mr. Seeger of the Minnesota State Land department and several railroad officials of the St. Paul and Pacific, who showed them over their lands around Wilmar. From here they went to St. Paul where they met the Governor, who invited them to choose that state as their prospective home, stating that they should not lay too much stress on the report of the cold winters in Minnesota in making their decision. Mr. Seeger ventured the information that they would find Minnesota similar to Nebraska in climate and soil, but that Minnesota had a better school system and also had more German settlers. The Minnesota legislature had already passed a special resolution inviting the Mennonites of Russia to settle within the state. In Minneapolis the delegates were shown over the city, visiting especially the falls in the Mississippi and the various industries of the city. From here they went over the St. Paul and Sioux City railroad to investigate the lands of that company in the southwestern part of the state between Mountain Lake and Worthington. They had now left the wilderness and found more evidences of civilization in their land tours, which was especially welcome to some of the delegates after a month or more in the uninhabited and mosquito infested prairie wastes of the far north. Instead of tents they now slept each night in comfortable sleeping cars on side tracks.

Instead of a slow boat, and mule team they travelled between the main points at least by fast trains. In many sections considerable land was already broken and under cultivation. The rattle of the reaper was a welcome change from the deep silence of the Manitoba and Dakota prairies. They seemed most impressed with the region about Mountain Lake. The soil here was a deep black loam, the grass grew tall and rank; but the grainfields were not so thrifty because of damage done by grasshoppers. The entire region was covered with many beautiful lakes. Railroad land could be bought for six dollars an acre. It was evidently a land that would be settled by such as had a little money.

After a week in Minnesota, the delegation left for the frontier of Nebraska. They arrived at Omaha on July 18, and took the Union Pacific west to Columbus, and from there south to what was called the Burlington and Missouri. Here they were accompanied by the Nebraska Land Commissioner and also by railroad representatives. They travelled as far west as Kearney, being shown railroad land at Lowell. They found this region somewhat hilly and the soil sandy, quite like their soil in Russia. Settlements were sparse. The farmers lived in sod houses with roofs of the same materials. The grass was short, and the grain seemed poorly developed due to a sudden drop in temperature during the maturing season. None of the delegates seemed impressed with this region. Beside all the above shortcomings, water seemed hard to find and wells were deep. Near Hastings the country looked somewhat better. At Red Cloud on the Republican river there was much short Buffalo grass. In the distance at this place they caught their first glimpse of the buffalo in his native state, and a number of antelope. The next day being Sunday, they attended services which were held in a schoolhouse near here, where J. F. Funk preached. Their final stop was Lincoln, a town at this time of seven thousand and the capital of the state, where they were shown through the city. This being the end of the long tour of investigation the party broke up. The Tschettlers and Unruh left for Elkhart, Indiana, on their way to New York. The rest of the party went to Summerfield, Illinois. After a few

days here, Schrag and Suderman, accompanied by Schantz, departed for Lancaster, Pennsylvania, while Buller and Ewert were induced by Christian Krehbiel to accompany him and a number of other land seekers from Summerfield on a tour through Kansas and Texas. By the middle of August all of the Russian delegates again met in New York in time to sail on August 20.

Suderman gives us no clue in his account as to the preferences and choices of the different delegates. All seemed agreed, however, that cheap land was available all along the frontier in unlimited quantities far beyond the needs of their Russian brethren; and they were also unanimous in recommending emigration. The party of seven whose travels through the United States we have just been following were further agreed that they would not recommend Manitoba. From other sources we learn that Ewert summed up his objections to the northern province under the heads—too many half-breeds, grasshoppers, mosquitoes, wet land, and cold winters. Such delegates as represented poor constituencies in Russia seemingly preferred the cheap Government land in Dakota to the higher priced railroad land in other states. The Tschetters, Schrag and Unruh seemed fully settled on the region about Fargo in the Red river valley. Ewert also at this time seemed impressed with the Dakota land, though he and Buller later settled in Kansas, being the only members of the entire delegation who had visited Kansas on their tour. Suderman is non-committal in his account as to his own preferences, but a few years later he also settled among his friends in Kansas.

In the meantime there were several other land excursions through the western states in the fall of 1873 which had a direct bearing on the choices made by the immigrants of the following year. Cornelius Jansen of Berdiansk, whose connection with the immigrant movement has already been mentioned, was summarily exiled by the Russian government because of his interest in that movement, and came to America in the late summer of 1873. From Berlin, Ontario, where he made his temporary home for a year, he and his son Peter made extensive tours through the western states soon after their arrival in Canada. C. B. Schmidt,

representative of the Sante Fe Railroad Company, says that Jansen favored Kansas, but he eventually chose Nebraska rather than Kansas as his final home, and it was no doubt through his influence that a number of his countrymen were located on the lands of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Company in Jefferson county. During this same fall a company of landseekers from Summerfield, Illinois, travelled through Kansas, finally selecting the region about Halstead for their settlement. Warkentin, a Russian immigrant himself, was a member of this party. David Goerz, one of the Crimean immigrant party, also located at Summerfield for a few years as teacher in the parochial school at that place. He, too, soon moved to Kansas and used his influence among his brethren for that state in the years that followed.

It is needless to say that all these excursions in quest of land were financed by the interested railroad companies, and cost the travellers nothing but their time.

As early as the summer of 1873, an advance party of Crimean immigrants had already landed in quest of new homes in America. These were quartered temporarily in several of the middle west communities, especially Elkhart, and Summerfield, awaiting the verdict of the various delegates as to a choice before they made their own decisions as to their final home. Several of these, however, made tours of their own and chose such locations as suited them best without reference to any decisions of the official delegates. Daniel Unruh, one of the wealthy members of the party, chose southeastern Dakota, near Yankton, a region evidently not considered by the official delegation; and by doing so he no doubt led Andreas Schrag and a large group of the Volhynian Swiss as well as the Huterites to that region the following year. J. Rempel, another member of the party, bought five thousand acres near Council Grove in what is now Morris county, Kansas, as early as June 26. This was the first purchase of land in Kansas by a Russian Mennonite ^a. Other members of the party made purchases

^a.The term Russian Mennonite as used in this book refers to the nationality and not the race of the Mennonites in Russia. Nearly all this group were of Dutch extraction, but in Prussia finally adopted the German

in Marion county a little later. Thirteen families located in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in December. All of these tours and settlements in 1873 had their influence upon the choices made by the groups who came the following year.

Let us return to the Canadian contingent of the delegation which we left at Winnipeg, July 6. From Winnipeg these first visited the Ontario Mennonites again, and then proceeded to Ottawa where they secured a written assurance from the Government officials that all their requests would be granted, and that they might reproduce on the prairies of Manitoba practically the same type of settlements they had enjoyed in Russia up to that time. The delegates returned to Russia with the following document in their possession from the Minister of Agriculture:

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

IMMIGRATION BRANCH

Ottawa, July 23, 1873.

Gentlemen:

I have the honour under the instruction of the Hon., the Minister of Agriculture, to state to you in reply to your letter of this day's date the following facts relating to advantages offered to settlers, and to the immunities afforded to Mennonites, which are established by the statute Law of Canada and by orders of His Excellency the Governor in Council, for the information of German Mennonites having intention to emigrate to Canada via Hamburg.

1. An entire exemption from military service is by Law and Order in Council granted to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites.

2. An Order in Council was passed on the 3d of March last to reserve eight townships in the province of Manitoba for free grants on the condition of settlement, as provided in the Dominion Land Act, that is to say:
"Any person who is the head of a family, or has attained

language which they retained both in Russia and America. Russian as applied in all references to the Dutch German speaking Mennonite immigrants from Russia to America, refers only to their most recent nationality. These Mennonites were neither Slav, nor German, but Dutch.

the age of 21 years, shall be entitled to be entered for one quarter section or a less quantity of unappropriated Dominion Lands, for the purpose of securing a homestead in respect thereof."

3. The said reserve of eight townships is for the exclusive use of the Mennonites, and the said free grants of one-quarter section to consist of 160 acres each, as defined by the Act.

4. Should the Mennonite settlement extend beyond the eight townships set aside by the Order in Council of March 3rd last, other townships will in the same way be reserved to meet the full requirements of Mennonite immigration.

5. If next spring the Mennonite settlers on viewing the eight townships set aside for their use should prefer to exchange them for any other eight unoccupied townships, such exchange will be allowed.

6. In addition to the free grant of one-fourth section or 160 acres to every person over 21 years of age on the condition of settlement, the right to purchase the remaining three-fourths of the section at One Dollar per acre is granted by law so as to complete the whole section of 640 acres, which is the largest quantity of land the government will grant a Patent for to any one person.

7. The settler will receive a Patent for a Free Grant after three years' residence, in accordance with the terms of the Dominion Land Act.

8. In event of the death of the settler the lawful heirs can claim the Patent for the Free Grant upon proof that settlement duties for three years have been performed.

9. From the moment of occupation, the settler acquires a "homestead right" on the land.

10. The fullest privileges of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded the Mennonites, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever; and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools.

11. The privilege of affirming instead of making affidavits is afforded by law.

12. The Government of Canada will undertake to furnish passenger warrants from Hamburg to Fort Garry for Mennonite families of good characters, for the sum of thirty dollars per adult person over the age of 8 years;

for persons under 8 years, half price, or fifteen dollars; and for infants under one year three dollars.

13. The Minister specially authorized me to state that this arrangement as to price shall not be changed for the seasons 1874, 1875 and 1876.

14. I am further to state if it is changed thereafter, the price shall not, up to the year 1882, exceed forty dollars for an adult and children in proportion, subject to the approval of Parliament.

15. The immigrant shall be provided with provisions on the portion of the journey between Liverpool and Collingwood; but during other portions of the journey they are to find their own provisions.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant

JOHN LOWE

Secretary of Department of Agriculture.

Messrs. David Klassen

Jacob Peters

Heinrich Wiebe

Cornelius Toews

Mennonite Delegates from Russia.

It will be observed that of the above concessions only numbers three and ten, and those dealing with the question of passage money from Europe to Canada were passed especially for the Russian Mennonites. All the others were already on the statute books, and applied to all parties, or had been passed for Mennonites and other non-resistants at an earlier date.

These terms were much more liberal than those secured by the United States delegates. In fact no promises were made at all by either State or National government with reference to either exemption from military service, or reservation of compact land areas. Nor were the railroad companies in a position to meet the demand for large land reservations since they owned only every alternate section along their right of way. The Homestead and Timber acts contained no provisions for granting options on any given areas such as the prospective immigrants desired in order to give them time first to dispose of their holdings

in Russia before buying here. A special act of Congress would be necessary to meet this requirement enabling the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw such lands from entry. The United States contingent of the delegation desired to take back home with them inducements for settlement in the United States equally as liberal as those secured by their fellow delegates in Canada. The most suitable and likely region where the necessary concessions might be secured seemingly was along the Red river on the Dakota side. And to this end they entered into an optional contract with the Northern Pacific Railroad Company for the reservation of a large tract in that region, and at the same time charged their agent, Michael Hiller, with the task of preparing a petition to the next Congress in December asking for the necessary legislation to withdraw the Congress lands from public entry. Following is the agreement made by the railroad company with the seven delegates :

New York, August 20, 1873.

1. Upon the request of the delegates August 20, the Northern Pacific agrees to reserve all its land in Dakota within fifty miles of the Red river until March 1, 1874, for the Mennonites to choose from for settlement. By July 1, 1874, the Mennonites must say how many villages they want land for.
2. The Company excludes certain lands near Fargo from the above which it may need for its own use.
3. The land finally chosen should be reserved for five years from July 1, 1874, but the buyers each year are to pay ten per cent. of the principal.
4. The price of the land is to be \$3.00 per acre, paid in United States paper money, or in Northern Pacific bonds without premium.
5. At the end of the five years the church can sell back to the Company all unsold lands, but fifty per cent. of the reserved lands are to be sold (under certain conditions).
6. In case they wish to reserve the lands for more than five years they can renew the time under certain conditions.
7. Terms of the Sale: Ten per cent. cash; ten per cent. each year after to the fifth year; and fifteen per cent.

each year for the remaining years. Interest is to be seven per cent.

8. During the three years from March 1, 1874, the Company will give the colonists a reduction of ten per cent. on all freight charges.
9. The Company will look after the comfort of the colonists as they arrive at their station, and will guarantee that the freight rates from New York will be reasonable. Free passes will also be given to a small number of Mennonites chosen by the church, not over six for a period of three years after July 1, 1874.
10. The Company also recognizes M. L. Hiller as the representative of the Mennonites.

G. W. CASS,
President N. P. R. R. Co.

FREDERICK BILLINGS,
Ch. of Land Committee.

This agreement, it will be observed, was not obligatory in any way upon the delegates with whom it was made, and its fulfillment was conditional no doubt upon the passage of the necessary law by Congress reserving the alternating sections of public lands from entry as well as the railroad lands. Had the petition to Congress been successful, it is possible that a large part at least of the immigrants might have settled in the Red river valley.

As for military exemption there did not seem to be any possibility of any satisfactory information, much less definite assurance of favorable promises from either the State or National authorities. Neither did the delegates seem to insist as rigidly upon this point as did their brethren in Canada; and at any rate since in the Civil War, closed just a few years before, Mennonites as well as other non-resistants were able to secure exemption upon a straight money payment when drafted, the delegates did not seem to fear that the same terms would not be open in case of any future war. Promises, no doubt, were made, however, by representatives of the railroad companies that favorable action would be taken by the States themselves on this matter, as actually was the case a few years later. Five of the delegates

seemed satisfied with this arrangement, but the Tschetters, of the Hutterite colonies, somewhat more concerned about securing something more definite in the way of a promise from the proper authorities for their people back in Russia, took advantage of a few days of leisure in New York to visit President Grant, who at this time was spending his vacation in his summer home on Long Island Sound. The visit was arranged by Hiller and is best told in the language of Paul Tschetter himself,

But since we wished to have a definite assurance we felt we must see President Grant in order to get definite information. Since the President was living on Long Island he was not far from New York, and easy to reach. Hiller also was very helpful in gaining an introduction for us to the President. We had prepared a petition which we wished to present to him, as follows:

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

We, the delegates, appeal in this petition that in case there should be a war, that we should be free for at least 50 years from everything that concerns war; after 50 years we are willing to pay as all others. The other governmental expenses we are willing to help bear as well as other citizens. We wish to be as obedient children also to the government in all matters that are not against our conscience. But we cannot take part in anything that pertains to the military, and pray we may enjoy here in peace, what in Russia we are exiled for. We also desire to know whether we may be permitted to form our colony in one community; and have our own German schools; whether we may control our own schools; whether we may establish our own form of local government in our colonies as it fits us, and whether we may be freed from the holding of office and also jury service and such like; and also whether we shall be free to vote or not.

We also desire to know under what conditions we may secure government land, and how many acres each person can have, and how old a person must be to obtain land; whether we may be freed from taking the oath, and whether our yea and nay will be regarded as sufficient, for swearing is just as much a matter of conscience with us as the matter of war, according to the word of our Lord

and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and whether in case our consciences should be violated we might have the privilege of emigrating from America.

If we, the delegates, can secure the above mentioned privileges, our brethren in Russia will be encouraged to emigrate to America. But if they cannot secure this, the emigration will be small; for most of them do not wish to risk the dangers connected with emigration for something uncertain.

Such is our humble prayer to his Excellency the President of the United States that he may give us a clear answer to this petition so that we poor and oppressed people may know what we should do.

Delegates PAUL TSCHETTER
July 26, 1873. LORENZ TSCHETTER

On July 27, accompanied by Hiller, we arrived at the President's home at eight o'clock in the evening and were introduced to President Grant by Hiller. He received us in the most friendly manner, and we gave him our petition which he read very carefully, or rather Hiller explained it to him for he could not read German; and he told us we must have patience to wait for an answer to our petition. But since we did not have time to wait for the answer we left New York on the Cimbria August 2 for home with the assurance that Hiller would send us the reply ¹.

The Tschetters in due time reached their homes in Russia where within a few weeks they received the following reply to their petition to the President:

Washington, Sept. 5, 1873.

The President sent to me the petition of the Mennonite delegates, and the reason for the delay in the answer is this: At the time of the meeting of Mennonites with the President he was told that they wished to depart in a few days. The only answer that could be given was that the President could not guarantee them the assurances they desired.

They wished guarantees of exemption from military

¹.Translated from the German diary of Paul Tschetter, by his son, Joseph.

service, and also jury service. They desire also to be free from the payment of substitute money in case of draft; and the right to govern their own schools.

Since personal military service, citizenship obligations, jury service, and control over schools are all matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the various states in which they wish to settle, the President says he cannot exempt them from the laws of the states and the laws to which other citizens are subject. As to the exemption from paying substitute money for fifty years, that, too, is beyond his power of promising. It is true, however, that for the next fifty years we will not be entangled in another war in which military service will be necessary. But should it be necessary there is little likelihood that Congress would find justification in freeing them from duties which are asked of other citizens.

It was impossible therefore to grant the answer which you (Hiller) and the delegates wished before their departure. I had to withhold the answer until I had opportunity to see the President.

With greatest obedience
Your Humble Servant
HAMILTON FISH.

At about the same time, too, Cornelius Jansen, who interested himself in all matters pertaining to the immigration of his Russian brethren, also had a visit with President Grant in connection with the matter of the land reservations. Jansen could speak English and his interview was more satisfactory than that of the Tschetters, who as they left the White House lamented the fact that Grant could not speak German. The story of Jansen's visit is best told by his son, Peter, in his memoirs written nearly fifty years later.

Before starting for the West from Philadelphia, one of our newly found friends, John B. Wood, went with us to Washington, D. C., to introduce us and our cause to the President of the United States, at that time General U. S. Grant, and to the Secretary of the Interior and other officials. I remember the incidents of this trip very vividly, as here I received the first insight into the official and political life of the country of our adoption. In Russia

we associated a government official with a uniform and lots of lace and trimmings, and the higher ones would always have guards of soldiers at the entrances of their quarters and residences. Imagine our surprise when we reached the "White House" to find the portals guarded by a single colored man who not even displayed a sword.

Our admission and introduction to President Grant was equally simple. A rather stocky, middle-aged man, with a closely cropped full beard and a well shaped head, dressed in a rather worn black Prince Albert coat, arose from his seat at the end of a long table and at the introduction of Mr. Wood, who knew the President personally, shook us cordially by the hand and invited us to sit down.

Mr. Wood explained to him our mission and that we expected many thousands of our people to follow us during the next few years to settle upon the vast prairies of the West. The President became very much interested and sent for Secretary of the Interior, Columbus Delano of Ohio, who proved to be a very pleasant gentleman, and who had been brought up on a farm.

He told us that in his younger years he had been in the habit of milking twenty cows mornings and evenings. President Grant also told us of his early experiences on the farm and said that he could hitch up and drive a team of horses as well as ever. You who never knew life in Europe, and especially in Russia, can hardly imagine our surprise when these gentlemen gave us the impression that it was the usual thing for the highest official of the United States and the Minister of Agriculture to do manual labor.

When our long interview was at an end, the President asked us whether we had ever seen Indians, and at our negative answer, he told us to wait a few minutes, as he expected to give General Custer, and a delegation of Indian chiefs an audience. They soon came in led by the General. There were nineteen chiefs and three squaws, with an interpreter. We were intensely interested in listening to a long pow-wow, at the end of which the Indians presented the President with some finely tanned and decorated Buffalo robes and other Indian curios. President Grant in turn gave them presents. To the ladies of the party he presented shawls of vivid hues, which pleased them greatly. One of the squaws draped her shawl about

her and proudly sat down in the President's arm chair at the head of the table.

General Custer, who by the way spoke German, asked me to accompany him and the Indians to a theater that night, where I had a good opportunity to observe the stoic aborigines.

Poor General Custer! Three years later he met his untimely death through the treachery of his red friends whom he had always treated so well.

Never shall I forget my first introduction to the hero of Appomatox, nor my first visit to the White House, and little did I dream that nearly thirty years later I would be one of a number of honored guests at a state dinner given by the lamented President McKinley in that house.

The various parties of the Committee of Twelve, it will thus be seen, spent about three months in Canada and the United States, investigating available lands offered for settlement, making such preliminary arrangements for the immigration of their people the following year, as they could, and leaving the completion of the plans in the hands of their friends here in America. The friends who were most interested in their cause during the fall of 1873 and the winter and spring of 1874 were John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana; Cornelius Jansen, temporarily located at Berlin, Ontario; Amos Herr of Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Bernhard Warkentin and Christian Krehbiel, both of Summerfield, Illinois; and the above-mentioned Michael Hiller representing the Northern Pacific Railroad Company—all these of the United States. In Canada J. Y. Schantz of Berlin, Ontario, was the representative of such as had decided to settle in Manitoba.

IV.

A PETITION THAT MISCARRIED

The friends of the immigration movement to whom the delegation of seven had committed their affairs at the time of their departure for Russia, all began an active campaign in the fall of 1873 and the winter of 1874 in behalf of favorable Congressional action relative to the withdrawal of public lands sufficiently large in amount to permit the establishing of large compact communities. A petition bearing the signatures of J. F. Funk and Amos Herr, and sponsored no doubt by Jansen was presented to the Lower House on December 8, by A. Herr Smith, Congressman from Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. Smith, who represented a large Mennonite constituency, judging from his middle name, was perhaps of Mennonite ancestry. The same petition was presented by Congressmen from Minnesota and Kansas the same day. On January 10 a similar petition was presented before the Senate by Senator Cameron, also of Pennsylvania, which read as follows:

To the Honorable, the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

We, the undersigned, belonging to the Christian denomination called Mennonites, of South Russia and Prussia, in our own behalf and that of our brethren, respectfully address the following to you:

For three generations our denomination has lived in Russia under their own control, free to enjoy, as a separate colony, our own religion, language, lands and customs, the Russian government only interfering to punish crimes and collect its revenues. Now by a recent edict of the Russian government passed 4th (16th) June, 1871, we are deprived of all those rights, liberties, and privileges which had been granted to us forever, and the choice is presented to us of leaving Russia within ten years from the above-mentioned date, or after that time become Rus-

sianized in language and religion. In Prussia where we lived for more than two hundred years in the liberty of conscience the government has acted the same.

We have determined to emigrate to some country where we can enjoy civil, social and religious liberty.

By examining your constitution and country, we find the full assurance that under your constitution and laws, we shall find the liberty we so earnestly desire, and the sentiment expressed by President Grant in his message of March 3, 1873, gives us great encouragement.

Desirous of settling in your country in colonies, there is, however, one obstacle in the way: the unimproved lands which we would be likely to select for our future homes being owned in alternate sections by railroads and the government, if we should purchase from the railroad companies, some of the sections belonging to the government would be taken up by persons who do not belong to our colony, and who are not in sympathy with us. Besides this our mode of farming is for fifteen or twenty families to join together on a large tract of land, and to have portions of it set aside for common pasture where all the horses and cattle may graze together, kept by one herder. This saves much expense in fencing.

It will require time—no doubt the eight years yet open to emigration—before all property in Russia can be disposed of, business finally settled, and the last of our brethren brought to their new home

In behalf, therefore, of our brethren, numbering between forty and fifty thousand, we would respectfully ask:

1. That if we select portions of railroad lands in different places suitable to our different wants as cattle-raisers, agriculturists, etc., we be allowed to take up and secure the sections of government lands lying adjacent thereto, either by purchase or under the homestead laws, and preserve the same until the year 1881.

2. If we find bodies of unoccupied land belonging to the government suited to our purposes that we be allowed the same privileges of taking up and securing a sufficient quantity of land protected from the interference of outside parties.

The Canadian government has offered to present us as much land as we would occupy within the before mentioned time, but a party of us would prefer to settle in

the United States, if the opportunity is given us to locate in colonies.

Our only object being to care for those in distress, should there be anything in our petition looking like speculation, we beg you will prevent it. Justice exalts a nation, says the Word of God; and if you will use your great influence to promote this mission, and assist the emigration of those who are persecuted for conscience sake, you will have the deepest thanks of the sorrow stricken Mennonites of Russia and Prussia, and what is much more the blessings of Him who says that even a drink of cold water shall not be without reward.

We are with high estimation,

SOME OF THE EMIGRANTS FROM RUSSIA AND
PRUSSIA CALLED MENNONITES

P. S. Our residence being transitory, if any reference should be required we beg to address to our brethren, Rev. Amos Herr, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, and John F. Funk, Elkhart, Indiana, who are in sympathy with us and conversant with our movements.

Before the chief clerk had finished the reading of this petition he was interrupted by Senator Ferry of Connecticut who objected to its being presented on the ground that the petitioners were foreign citizens. This precipitated a disputation on the floor of the Senate in which Senators Sumner of Massachusetts, Morton of Indiana, and others took an active part on the question of whether such a petition could be received. Senator Ferry finally consented to its being read but objected to its reception. Senator Cameron, then evaded this violation of the rules of the Senate by substituting his own name as the petitioner instead of that of the Russian Mennonites. The petition was thus received and referred to the Committee on Public Lands for further action.

Of the activities leading up to the presentation of this petition we have little information. But from a series of letters written back and forth among the men above-mentioned during this time, copies of which were preserved by the late Leonhard Suderman, we can get a few glimpses of what was being done for the Russian Mennonites by their friends on this side of the Atlantic

in the winter of 1873-74. The first of these letters in the collection is one by M. L. Hiller to J. F. Funk under date of December 1, 1873. Hiller informs Funk that he had just seen the petition with Herr's and Funk's names attached, which is a very great surprise to him: for he had been instructed by the delegates before their departure to secure these land concessions, as well as the cheapest rates for them by water from the Black Sea to New York, and then overland to the West by rail. He had consulted with Jansen whom he had met in New York on all these matters but did not expect him to use this information in his own behalf. He has been making good progress, he says, on all the matters referred to him by the delegates, and especially on the matter of land concessions, having quietly seen a number of influential Congressmen in the meantime. The petition he fears will give the matter too much publicity, and may endanger the whole scheme.

The next day Funk in a letter to Herr, speaking of Hiller's complaint, suggests that Herr write Hiller a conciliatory letter in order "to keep peace in the family." He also expresses his satisfaction with the President's recommendation to Congress relative to the desired legislation. From the same letter we also learn of the several advance settlements that were made in the fall of 1873. Speaking of these settlements Funk says:

Unruh, Schroeder, Voth and others have settled in Dakota near Yankton, where there is plenty of government land, homesteads, preemption and under the tree planting law. But they say a good deal of the land is stony and not very good; and so they say Peters, Penner, Strauss, Gloeckler and others have settled near Mountain Lake on the Sioux City and St. Paul R. R. The Funk brothers have settled with several others in Marion and McPherson counties, Kansas. John Gloeckler, Henry Goertz and several of his children are still here. (Elkhart no doubt). Fast and his son-in-law have also gone to Kansas. I am glad to see what you have done in regard to the immigration of the brethren with the government at Washington.

In a letter dated December 5, Herr, writing to Jansen, also congratulates the latter upon his favorable reception in Washing-

ton, and his success in securing the aid of both President Grant and Secretary Delano in behalf of their project. Speaking of his own activities among the Pennsylvania politicians Herr says:

I had a friend of mine and a man of influence speak to our senators (Cameron and Scott). One of them spoke of some Indian reservation, such very fine land that they would open soon.

Referring to the Hiller situation he continues:

He is under the influence of those railroad companies. We had a talk about the water question in Dakota. I told him I thought they should sink some wells. He said he plead with them to do so. He thinks there is water there and if Jay Cook were still on his feet they would do it, but the others said they had spent money enough. I told him I feared that they had spent their money for nothing unless they convinced our people that there was water there. I understand he had another place in view in case they did not go to Dakota in Nebraska; but if we could get a location on some of the Indian reservations, I am told they are among some of the best lands in the country but I have not seen them.

In a later letter to the same party, Herr, in speaking of his own efforts in behalf of getting the proper Senators interested in the matter says:

I was to see our United States Senator Friday. Brother Dan was with me. Had a friend to speak to him. He desired to see me and received me very cordially and I think we have his sympathy. Will do what he can and will also assist Herr Smith. Met some others also who promised to do what they could. We feel quite hopeful. Herr Smith would like to know just how many acres we want. Funk suggests sixteen or seventeen townships. Better make it sixteen, so as not to ask for too much. Herr Smith also wants to know whether we want homestead land or not. I think about half homestead and half at Congress price would be about right, so the poor could get land and the others pay for it. Do not want to ask for too much. We might lose it all. Herr Smith seems very particular, he also wants to know where we want the land and if it is all to be in one body. I thought our

petition was easily understood but he asks many questions. No doubt he is very busy. If necessary I said I would come to Washington. Congress meets tomorrow. Could you come if needed if you get a telegraph dispatch?

In the meantime in spite of the apparent interest of the Pennsylvania statesmen, not much headway was being made in getting the desired legislation through Congress. The promoters feared that nothing would be done in time to help the Russian immigrants to decide upon the United States instead of Canada. Herr in a letter of January 30, 1874, to Jansen says:

Our mission to Washington I have lost faith in. The railroad companies would have no chance to speculate on our people with their lands if that bill passed. I believe they opposed us very much, but there is plenty of Government land we could homestead and preempt. In Dakota (speaking of the Yankton region, and not of the northern part of the territory) the railroad companies have no land. It is all open to actual settlers. It is a beautiful country where Unruh and Schrock are. The Mayor of Yankton and others took us out to Unruh's colony. We were there over night. There were five of us, Gabriel Barr, John Shenk, brother Daniel Herr, Jacob Herr and myself. Early next morning we started for a trip over the prairies. I suppose we travelled fully fifty miles. We were far beyond the settlements, and as far as the eye could see there was nothing but the heavens above and the prairie below. There is no timber save along the streams. The land seems to be very productive and is not rolling. They say there is a stretch of such land laying open along the James river for 200 miles; but brother, it was not to get land for our brethren that we went out. I want our people to make selections for themselves. There are many places where there is good land. But I thought it was our duty if our brethren came in considerable numbers and wanted to go west to see that there would be a shelter provided for them until they could find some place to go. The Mayor and people of Yankton promised us that if some hundred came at a time and we sent them a dispatch, they would have reception houses for them to remain for a few days till they could suit themselves. They promised all we could ask. . . . I went to Kansas. I thought

it was my duty, the position I am placed in to make an arrangement in Kansas as well as in Dakota. I have no interest in either place. The agent of the Atchison, Topeka and Sante Fe railroad promised us if a number would come to Kansas at one time and we would telegraph to him, they would have reception houses for them till they came. They are very anxious they should come there. They would like to see them on their lands, but rather see them on Government land than go to Dakota.

In course of time, however, appropriate bills were presented to both Houses, based on the requests of the petition. Herr Smith introduced a bill to the Lower House on February 24. It was referred to the Committee on Public Lands where it remained buried until April 1, when a substitute bill was presented by the Committee with the request that it be made a special order of the day for the following Wednesday, since quick action would be needed if the Mennonites who were already on the way from Russia were to receive any benefit from the legislation. So far as the records show this was the last action taken on it.

In the Senate, however, where the western railroad companies seemed to exert some power upon western Senators there was more consideration given to the request of the Mennonites. The friends of the proposed legislation were the Senators from the western states where the Mennonites desired to settle, and in Pennsylvania and Indiana, where they were well-known as citizens, and where Amos Herr and John F. Funk evidently had been busy. The opposition came principally from the New England states which for years had consistently opposed all land legislation which would favor the expansion of the West. As we saw, Senator Cameron of Pennsylvania had introduced the petition on January 12. Although Senator Cameron remained one of the staunch friends of the cause of the Mennonites, it was Senator Windom of Minnesota, a stockholder of the Northern Pacific, who introduced the bill on April 2, which would grant the requests. This bill as amended by the Committee on Public Lands, and reported April 7, provided for setting aside for no longer than two years of an area of not more than 500,000 acres all told.

No one group was to have more than 100,000 acres and no one person to be given more than 160 acres. For the next two weeks this bill occupied a prominent place in the discussions of the Senate. Senator Windom spoke frequently in behalf of the measure and always in the highest terms of praise of the Mennonites both in this country and Russia. He was very anxious that the bill be passed, and said, "I think it is utterly impossible for us to secure this valuable accession to our population unless we make some such provision as this," because of the inducements offered them by the Dominion of Canada in western Manitoba. In his first address in behalf of the bill he included the entire agreement made with the delegates by the Dominion government as an evidence of that Government's desire to secure the Mennonite immigrants. Referring to these liberal terms he says:

They prefer our country, and unless we choose to drive away forty thousand of the very best farmers of Russia who are now competing with us in the markets of the world with some ten million bushels of their wheat, if we choose that Russia shall raise that wheat or that Canada shall provide it instead of our own country, we can simply reject the proffer of these people, and they probably will not become our citizens. I deem it of the most importance that this bill shall pass.

Senator Edmunds of Vermont in a long speech was the first to object to the passing of the bill. "I do not think," he said, "that American history has furnished a precedent for a bill of this character." He opposed especially the policy of settling in compact groups where distinctions of speech, religion, nationality and social customs tend to perpetuate themselves. He continued:

Let us have no exclusions; let us know no boundaries; let us be a nation and a people where every man stands on an equality with his fellow man, where there are no boundaries like Chinese walls to separate one sect or one opinion of politics, or one calling from another; but an equal citizenship and an equal freedom.

Ferry of Connecticut, the Senator who objected to the reception of the petition on January 12, raised the question of military exemption. Although this bill contained no exemption

clause, yet the fact that the Mennonites were leaving Russia because of compulsory military service was sufficient evidence to Ferry, who said he obtained all his information about the Mennonites from the daily press and the encyclopedia, that they would object to such service here. Furthermore, according to the proposed law, they might enter land without becoming citizens; and non-citizens were not subject to military service. He would speak and vote against the bill, he said, unless it were amended so as to make the acquisition of land conditional on compulsory citizenship.

Exception was taken to this latter view by Conklin of New York, who made a number of speeches in the course of the debate, although he seemed neither for nor against the bill. He cited a number of precedents to prove that non-citizens were not exempt from military service.

Both the Pennsylvania Senators, Cameron and Scott, were among the ardent supporters of the proposed measure, and were especially profuse in their praise of the Mennonites in their own state. Referring to these Cameron said:

We have a large number of these people in Pennsylvania. They are among the best of our citizens. They are nearly all farmers. Their farms are the most highly cultivated of all our lands in Pennsylvania, and I think our lands are as well cultivated as any I have seen in any part of the world. . . . They settled early in Lancaster county, and now a number of them are in almost every county of the state, especially where there is good land. They have a fancy for fine limestone valleys, and wherever there is a fine limestone country, there have the descendants of the early Mennonites gone. They are among our best citizens. They never interfere with anybody; they pay their debts; and they take care of their own poor. . . . so entirely are they believed to be honest that they can borrow money anywhere without any security. They are a thrifty, laborious, saving people. Now they are cultivating a school system. There is not a township in the counties where they reside but has a large number of schoolhouses of the best kind, with all the advantages which science has furnished to those who now build

schoolhouses. They are hospitable. You cannot go to their homes without receiving a portion of what they have, and they never charge anybody for the entertainment which they furnish. I do not believe there is a better class of people in the world than the German Mennonites.

Speaking of the objections made by Senator Edmunds that there should be no settlements by colonies Cameron continues:

In the early history of our country the settlements were everywhere made by colonies. In the lower part of Northampton county, Pennsylvania, the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians settled; in Chester county the Quakers went; and in Lancaster county the Mennonites; on the other side of the Susquehanna the whole country was settled by Scotch and Irish.

Cameron's colleague, Senator Scott, followed in the same strain. Speaking for the Mennonites, Tunkers and "Ahmische" in his own region he declared that he could truthfully say that

for thrift, industry, economy and good morals they are not exceeded by any other class of the population in that or any other state of this Union. They are not either as is sometimes asserted a laggard people in substantial improvement, for in recent years many of them have exerted a spirit of enterprise and desire for the intellectual advancement of their people as great as that of almost any other religious denomination. I have in my mind's eye now two representative men among the Mennonites in Pennsylvania whom I do not deem it any impropriety to name, one of them Shem Zook,¹ of Mifflin county, a man of very considerable literary culture who has written a history of that branch of the denomination to which he belongs; another Isaac Kaufman, of Somerset county, a man of great wealth who has given his time, his influence and his money to the advancement of the building of railroads² and other public improvements in the portion of

¹Shem Zook was an influential layman among the Amish during the middle of the last century, and among other services he published an edition of the *Martyrs' Mirror*. He was secretary frequently of the Amish General Conference held from 1862 to 1878.

²The railroad in Mifflin county from Belleville to Lewistown and formerly spoken of as the "Hook and Eye" line may be meant here.

the state in which he lives. There are many such men among them. They are encouraging newspapers, and establishing institutions of learning.

If there is any class of people, Mr. President, whom we should encourage to come to our shores by any legislation in consonance with our general policy in reference to the public lands, it can not be extended in any direction with more advantage to our public interest than by encouraging the Mennonites to settle among us, and a properly guarded bill providing for that purpose shall have my cordial support.

John F. Funk's home state, Indiana, through Senator Pratt thought equally well of the Mennonites in America. Pratt said:

There is no worthier class of people upon the face of the globe. I hold in my hands a book which describes the articles of their faith, gives their history from the time of Menno Simon, their founder, and shows how they were persecuted in Europe because of their peculiar views, they like the Quakers being unwilling to bear arms; and the editor at the close of this article giving the history of the Mennonites says this of them:

'They are distinguished above all others for their plainness in dress, economy in domestic arrangements, being frugal, thrifty and withal very hospitable. They take in strangers, treat them kindly without charge. They suffer none of their members to become a public charge.'

Replying to the charge made by the eastern Senators that this is an unprecedented bill providing special legislation, the Indiana statesman continues:

This to be sure is exceptional legislation, but the occasion for it is exceptional, and the opportunity which this country has of acquiring a large and very valuable body of immigrants to this country is an exceptional opportunity, and we are likely to lose this immigration unless we pass this measure or something similar to it.

Although all these and other questions were raised in the course of the debate on the bill, the chief issue was the quantity of land that was to be included in the special concession. Senator Windom estimated that before all the immigrants became set-

tled they would require somewhere near 5,000,000 acres. The original bill however, as we saw provided a sum total of 500,000 with a maximum for any one group of 100,000 acres, a little less than five townships. The bill was later amended by Senator Stewart of Nevada, making one township the maximum to be set aside at any one time, with provisions for additional succeeding townships as the land was occupied by actual settlers. Most of the debate centered about this amended bill.

After nearly a full week of debate during which a large part of each session was devoted to the consideration of this bill, and on the last day, April 23, when Senator Windom hoped to bring the discussion to a close with a vote, several new speakers took part in the debate. Senator Thurman of Ohio opposed the bill on the ground that

if this policy be accepted it will open a door to the most outrageous frauds. I think it will be easy if this thing is done for sharp designing men when it is once found that Congress will pass such laws, to come here representing themselves as entitled to represent large bodies of immigrants coming to this country and asking the passage of precisely similar bills; and how are you to refuse them? Are you going to refuse them on the ground that their sect of religion is not as good as the Mennonites, or that you do not quite agree with their sentiments in morals or politics or something else? Are we to have an investigation into the character and opinions of the immigrants? Are we to have a religious or a moral or a philosophical or an economical test set up whenever such grants are asked for? I think we shall have a task upon our hands that will be quite too large for our execution.

Sargent of California, too, opposed the bill, remarking that he had had an opportunity several months before of meeting several of the Russian Mennonite leaders and found them

to be men of very high intelligence, and they seemed to speak the English language with considerable purity, and I have no doubt that if they are anything near representative of the class of people that sent them here, it will be a valuable acquisition to the Republic to have them

come among us, but not to have them come as a community isolated from the rest of the body-politic.

The strongest speech in favor of the measure on this day was made by Senator Tipton who also represented one of the states that hoped to benefit from the proposed immigration, Nebraska. Replying to the fears of the Senator from Connecticut that the peace loving Mennonites might not become good citizens he said:

So far as sustaining the Government is concerned, have you any complaint? Who would not take tomorrow forty-five thousand Pennsylvania Quakers and locate them all over the western territory? Have you any law by which you could banish Pennsylvania Quakers? Have they not done their duty in sustaining the Government? What did they do when they could not go to war themselves according to their conscience? We did not all go our-selves; it never will be necessary that all the people go to war; and in God's name, have we not enough of the fighting element in America? Look to Arkansas today, where the people are never happy unless they are in a fight, (laughter) never doing well unless in a fight. A funeral is the concomitant of a fight of course. Our people are a peculiar people; and if there is any portion of the world that can send us a few advocates of peace in God's name let us bid them welcome. We want settlers of that kind.

After the hour which had been allotted to this discussion on this final day had expired, Senator Windom tried in vain to either secure a vote on the measure, or an extension by unanimous consent for further discussion. At any rate if the proposed law was to be of any benefit to the Mennonites it must be passed immediately. But due to the objection of Edmunds, Windom's efforts were fruitless. The unanimous consent could not be obtained. Senator Merriman of North Carolina, who was patiently waiting to present a bill of his own on another matter, perhaps expressed the sentiment of a number of disinterested Senators when he replied to a request to yield the floor for further discussions of Windom's bill:

This Mennonite bill seems to be in the way of everything else. I am very anxious myself to see it out of the

way, and therefore am willing to yield if the Senate desires me to do so.

Windom's motion for an extension of time was lost, however, and the Senate proceeded with other business. This ended the long discussion on this measure. Windom never brought it up again, because it was already too late if it was to serve its purpose as an inducement to direct the Mennonite immigration to the United States instead of Canada. The emigration movement in Russia was already well under way by this time and thousands of Mennonites were about ready to start for America. The failure of this bill to become law evidently did not seriously affect the choice of the immigrants. As we saw, the *Kleine Gemeinde* and the *Bergthaler* groups had already decided upon Canada; and the remaining colonists evidently decided to come to the United States even though they could not secure special land concessions.

It would be interesting to know just what were the influences that were opposing the passage of the above bill. Only a limited group of Senators, of course, were actively interested in the measure, those from the western land states and several whose interest had been aroused by Mennonite constituencies like the Senators from Pennsylvania and Indiana. There may be some truth in the suggestion of Amos Herr's that the railroad companies, some of them at least, were fighting it. The Northern Pacific, of course, was favorable, because the Red river valley would be likely to secure the greatest part of the immigration in case the bill passed. The Union Pacific was not favorable because their own lands were not being considered, although the Nebraska Senator, Tipton, favored the bill. The *Sante Fe* which ultimately received the major portion of the immigration, and which had already contracted with the Summerfield delegation for a township of railroad land near Halstead, evidently was not in favor of a measure that would encourage the immigrants to settle in the Red river valley; and the Kansas Senators took no part in the discussion of the bill.

Although Windom represented Minnesota in the Senate, the

territory of Dakota would have been the chief beneficiary of the bill had it passed, rather than Minnesota; for the land which the delegation had reserved from the Northern Pacific was on the Dakota side of the Red river. A recent Dakotan historian suggests that had the bill become law it might have been of considerable importance to the later history of the territory. There was considerable sentiment at this time among the inhabitants of the northern half for a division of the territory, but Congress objected to the division because of the lack of sufficient population to justify it. Had this bill passed, and brought in some ten thousand Mennonite settlers into the Red river valley, then the chief objection to the division would have been removed, and there would have been a new territory called Pembina, so conjectures this historian, and ultimately Pembina territory would have become the state of Pembina, "a perpetual memorial of the coming of a people induced hither neither by avarice or material gain, but purely that they might enjoy the liberty of conscience to worship God according to its dictates." It is by no means certain, however, that northern Dakota would have received the major portion of the immigrants had the bill passed. Settlements had already been made in the meantime by the summer of 1873, as we have seen elsewhere, in Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska and south-eastern Dakota.

V.

BEGINNING THE GREAT TREK

In the meantime while the events described in the last chapter were taking place, the Mennonites of Russia were busy with preparations for the great adventure beyond the seas. Even before the Committee of Twelve had returned from America, several small groups had sold all their possessions and had already embarked upon their voyage to the land of Freedom. Leonhard Suderman on his return from this western tour speaks of a visit he had made to a group of Russian Mennonites in Detroit just recently arrived. On the same ship on which some of the delegates came across in 1873, the *Frisia*, there were several families of prospective settlers from the Crimea—Rudolf Riesen, his son-in-law, David Goerz, who became a teacher in the parochial school at Summerfield for several years, J. J. Funk, later a student at Wadsworth, Abraham Quiring, Johan Rempel, and Johan Regier—all of whom arrived at Summerfield in the month of June.

Another group, a little larger than either of the preceding ones, consisting of twenty-seven families, also from Crimea, had taken passage for America in July, and had arrived in New York in time to meet several of the Committee of Twelve on their return to Russia. Here William Ewert told them of a choice location for settlement near Fargo, Dakota, and informed them that he himself had marked the site with a buffalo head. This group found its way to Elkhart, Indiana, where for several weeks they remained encamped in the Mennonite meeting house at that place and several other houses near by, while the leaders of the party accompanied by John F. Funk toured the West, including the region about Ewert's buffalo head, in search of a permanent home.

It was not until after the return of the Committee of Twelve, however, that preparations were begun for a mass emigration. The enthusiastic reports of the Committee, and the information

that land could be had in any quantity and on easy terms with religious freedom in both the United States and Canada aroused great interest throughout the colonies in the winter of 1873 and '74. In those centers where the emigration fever was highest steps were immediately taken by many to dispose of their property with a view to an early departure in the following spring for America. But it was soon found that this would not be an easy matter especially in such settlements as Alexanderwohl, Bergthal, and others where whole colonies had decided to emigrate enmasse.

Everybody wanted to sell, and there was nobody to buy. To make matters worse, in many of the colonies the Mennonites were living on original Crown lands in which they had only a limited ownership of the soil. It was only the use of it that they had a right to sell to others; and even that could be transferred only to fellow Mennonites according to the original grant made by the Czar. Buildings and improvements of course also belonged to them; but without land, improvements were not of great value. The marketability of land in the Mennonite settlements was thus greatly restricted; and during the first few years of emigration, well-improved farms sold for half or less of their real value. Some years later the Government permitted the sale out right of land, but by that time the non-Mennonite buyers took advantage of the oversupply of farms for sale and continued to purchase them at a mere fraction of their actual worth. In spite of these discouragements, however, whole villages and colonies continued their preparations for the long journey throughout the spring and summer of 1874.

The next task was to secure the necessary passports permitting emigration from the country. This, too, was frequently a tedious and long drawn out process demanding heavy fees, and accelerated only by liberal gratuities to corrupt government officials. Sometimes it was months after requests had been sent in for passports before they were available; and every step was attended with heavy expense. A local historian of the Volhynian Swiss settlement in Dakota is authority for the statement that the

average amount paid by each family of that group for the necessary emigration documents was about \$50.00.

By this time the government officials at St. Petersburg, realizing that there was a strong likelihood of losing some forty thousand of the Czar's most industrious farmers in South Russia, began to consider means for stemming the emigration tide. To this end the Czar sent Adjutant General von Todtleben¹, him-

¹Rev. H. R. Voth, of Newton, Kansas, now a man of seventy, but then a youth of twenty, has the following interesting comments to make on one of Todtleben's visits,—

I remember well and was present the day when the would-be immigrants were assembled in the large church of the Alexanderwohl congregation which emigrated almost entirely. General Todtleben, a tall splendidly built man, and the Governor of Taurien, a small person, with decorations on their breasts entered the church and took a position before the high pulpit. The General then (as far as I can remember) without any formality addressed the large audience in German. He said that he had been called into the private office (Privat-Kabinet) of the Czar and had been instructed to go to South Russia and to try to persuade the Mennonites to remain in Russia. He then pictured the dark side of America, the possible hardships of the journey and of getting a new start in the new country, and the bright side of Russia, the advantages of staying where we were. Of course I can not remember all he said, but distinctly recall the fact that he then put the question to the audience whether it would not after all be better to repurchase homes again and remain. It should be stated that we had then been waiting nine months for our passports already, most of us having been without homes for about that long.

In conclusion the General stated that he would be at Halbstadt until towards evening and if any should change their minds to let him know. The Governor did not say anything nor any body else so far as I remember. While the two men passed out, the congregation sang. A brief conference was then held which showed that not one had changed his mind. A committee was appointed to drive to Halbstadt to inform the General of this fact, and to appeal to him for assistance to get our passports. This

self a German Lutheran, a Crimean war hero well-known among the German colonists, through the Mennonite communities offering those who would remain certain exemptions from the most objectionable features of the new military law. He met the Mennonite civil and religious leaders in the month of May, 1874, at Halbstadt, Chortitz and Alexanderwohl, where he informed them that he was authorized by the Czar to offer them some sort of civil service as a substitute for the compulsory military service required in the proposed conscription act. At the same time he tried to discourage the emigration movement by painting America in its darkest colors. In America he said the pioneer settlers would be compelled to spend much time and labor in draining swamps and cutting forests before the land would be fit for cultivation. Since labor was scarce in the new country, the settlers would be under the necessity of doing all this work themselves, whereas in Russia all such work was done by cheap Russian labor. As for military exemption in America, the Mennonites were not exempted from service in the South during the Civil war; and as for the North where they proposed to settle it seemed altogether likely at that time that war with England was inevitable, in which case they no doubt would be called into service with all others.

This visit of Todtleben's with his promise of substitute civil service disconnected from the army, no doubt, influenced many of the more liberal-minded Mennonites to reconsider their determination to leave Russian soil. Both in Chortitz as well as in Halbstadt the majority of the leaders present at those meetings wrote Todtleben a letter of thanks after his departure, with expressions of gratitude for his kindly visit, and of entire satisfaction with the substitute service offered; at the same time uttering the hope, nevertheless, that they might also be left in entire control of their school system which it was rumored under the new Russianization

committee as we learned later was most cordially received by the General, and when they told him of the result and kindly asked him to help us to get our passports he promptly replied: "I shall do it." And he did; in a comparatively short time we had them, and could leave the country.

program was to be placed under government control. These promises were enacted into law the following year with the following provisions:

Mennonites were to be exempt from military service, in lieu of which they were to be assigned to duty in hospitals, munition factories, or especially in forestry service, where they were to be permitted to work in compact and exclusive groups. These concessions were to apply in times of war as well as in times of peace; but were offered only to the original Mennonite settlers in Russia and their descendents. Immigrants coming into Russia, or outside accessions coming into the church after the passing of the law were not to be included.

While the majority seemed satisfied with these rather liberal concessions, there was a strong minority, nevertheless, who believed that any service under the guise of military law would be a violation of their peace principles. These still preferred emigration to any compromise with their consciences. In the words of Elder Isaac Peters, one of the staunchest defenders of this position, and exiled in midwinter because of his activities in demanding absolute exemption, the government by keeping the substitute service under the control of the military department, and by limiting forestry service to a period of twenty years was keeping the back door open for entrance later into direct military service.

Many of those, therefore, sharing these views, including whole villages, continued their preparations for departure during the spring and summer of 1874. These included in the main the more conservative groups, such as the daughter colonies of the Chortitz settlement, Bergthal and Fuerstenland, Alexanderwohl, the Swiss of Volhynia, the Huterites, and the Kleine Gemeinde colony of Borsenko. These emigrated bodily; but from every settlement and from almost every village there were some who preferred emigration to compromise.

The military question, of course, was not the only issue involved in this movement. This is proven by the fact that not only Mennonites, but German Lutherans and Catholics as well, none of whom shared the Mennonite peace principles, had decided to

leave their adopted country for America during this time. The program of Russianization which the Government had adopted would ultimately deprive all these privileged colonies of the special status which they had enjoyed up to this time, with exclusive control over their schools, the use of their native language, and almost entire control over local government under a special German commission. This commission was now to be abolished; the schools placed under the direct control of the Russian government; and the Russian language to be taught side by side with the German. To the Mennonites especially there seemed a close connection between their distinctive Mennonitism and their *Deutschtum*. It was a matter of grave doubt to many whether it would be possible for them to retain their religion without their German culture and language. Then, too, in all the colonies, Mennonite and otherwise, there were those who decided to cast their lot with the religious absolutists for economic reasons. In every westward movement in past history there has been a large contingent of the landless. And they were not absent here. All these motives must be taken into consideration when seeking for the ultimate causes back of the emigration movement.

Among the first of the small groups to leave for the new world in the spring of 1874 was a small advance guard of Swiss Volhynians consisting of ten families under the leadership of Andreas Schrag, one of the deputies the year before. This group left their Russian home on April 10, and after about six weeks of travel they arrived at New York, May 20. After remaining for a few days at Elkhart, Indiana, they reached Yankton, Dakota, May 27.

About the same time William Ewert, also a deputy of the year before, with several Prussians from the congregation at Thorn, and a small number of families from Russian Poland, arrived on the *Westphalia*. After spending several days enroute from New York, they arrived at Peabody, May 16, where Ewert and his Prussian brethren located at Bruderthal, near Marion Center, Kansas.

Another group, somewhat larger, was that of the Krimmer

Brethren from Crimea. This company of some thirty families left their home at Annefeld, near Simferopol, under the leadership of their Elder Jacob Wiebe, and Johan Harder, on May 30. They came to Hamburg by way of Odessa, Lemberg, and Breslau, the usual route taken by those from South Russia. Crossing England they took passage at Liverpool on an Inman liner, the *City of Brooklyn*, on June 15. Before the ship weighed anchor Wiebe conducted a religious service for his people in their immigrant quarters in the bow of the vessel. After a stormy voyage lasting several weeks they arrived at New York in early July, where they were met by Bernhard Warkentin, the representative of the recently organized Mennonite Board of Guardians, and by him directed to Elkhart, Indiana. The next day Elder Wiebe preached a sermon in the Mennonite meeting house "by invitation to many listeners." And this remained their home for several weeks where they were supported by the good people of Elkhart, while the elder and other leaders searched the West for suitable homes for the party.

It was not until late in summer, however, that the breaking up of the large colonies began in Russia. One of the most important of these was the large Alexanderwohl congregation of some eight hundred souls in the heart of the Molotschna settlement. This congregation which as we have already seen had come as a body from Prussia in 1820 now decided to emigrate to America as a whole. From the start it had been the center of the emigration movement. Here the first meetings to discuss the whole situation had been held in 1872 and '73; and their elder, Jacob Buller, was one of the Committee of Twelve. Even before the return of their delegate from America the Alexanderwohlers had decided upon emigration. On November 6, another meeting was held to make final arrangements for securing passports. This they found a trying task. Passports had been promised by March of 1874; but this was just the time when Todtleben appeared in the colonies, and the Russian officials found plenty of excuses to delay the granting of the necessary documents which would permit the Mennonites to leave their country. It was not until the middle of July

that passports were finally granted at Simferopol, several hundred miles away. Before these were finally distributed another week had passed, and it was the twentieth of July before the day of departure was set. In the meantime the farmers had been disposing of their property as best they could and at sacrificial prices. According to one of their leaders, "Ohm" Gaeddert, the farms sold at about half their real value or less; implements and household goods at less than quarter their value; while cattle and food supplies usually brought a fair price.

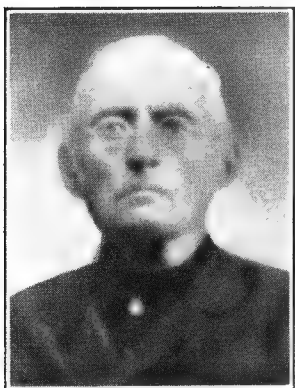
On the day of departure there were no sad farewell scenes, because there were few left to say good-by to. Only seven families, it is said, were left of the whole Alexanderwohl congregation. Besides the Alexanderwohlers, a number of individuals from various villages in the Molotschna settlement attached themselves to this group, so that there were above one thousand souls that left for Hamburg, the port of embarkation. The party left in four groups, three of sixty families each, and the last of thirty-six families. At Hamburg they embarked on two ships of the Hamburg-American line, the *Cimbria* and the *Teutonia*. The former left harbor on August 12, and the latter followed a few days later. The *Teutonia* was an old coaling ship converted for the purpose into an improvised passenger vessel, and was filled with Mennonite passengers exclusively on this voyage. After a tedious voyage of eighteen days she landed at New York on September 3. Here the immigrants were all met by David Goerz, William Ewert, and C. B. Schmidt, all loyal Kansas boosters by this time, who succeeded in enticing nearly all the *Teutonia* group under the guidance of Dietrich Gaeddert and Peter Balzer to the fair Sunflower state. Arriving at Topeka several days later, they were housed temporarily with other fellow immigrants who arrived about the same time in an old ware-house owned by the railroad company, and known as the King Bridge shops. The *Cimbria* party, however, under the leadership of Elder Jacob Buller, who had not seen Kansas as a delegate, and who seemed to prefer Dakota at this time, were not ready to commit themselves to Kansas immediately; and so took a middle course by going to

Nebraska. Here they were given temporary quarters in the state fair grounds in Lincoln for several weeks while their leaders were busy visiting three states looking for a permanent home.

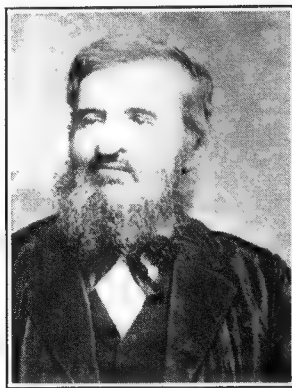
Another large group that was actively engaged in preparing to emigrate at this time was the congregation of Swiss in the province of Volhynia within the territory of former Poland. A few families from this region as we saw had already come to Dakota early in the spring of this year. The main body, however, was not able to get away until late in the summer. The congregation which also emigrated almost as a whole lived within a number of villages in the eastern side of the province of which the following were the most important—Kotosufka, Horoditz, Waldheim. Unlike their Alexanderwohl brethern, who for the most part were fairly well to do, and who took care of their own poor, this colony was in straitened circumstances and required American help to carry out their desires. For the most part they lived on small farms, well wooded but not especially fertile. Their principal occupation was dairying and small farming. Such property as they had they, too, were forced to sell at a sacrifice. Early letters appearing in the *Friedensbote*, a Pennsylvania Mennonite journal, and signed by their elder Jacob Stuckey, asked for American aid. More than half of the 159 families in these villages it was said would need help if they were to find their way to America. Aid was finally furnished through the Pennsylvania committee, so that by the middle of August the whole party left in several ships of the Inman line, but most of them on the *City of Richmond*. They arrived at New York almost at the same time as the passengers of the *Teutonia*, and with them were faced with the task of deciding upon their western destination. Some fifty families chose to cast their lot with their deputy of the year before in Dakota, while the remainder followed Ewert to Kansas where they shared with the *Teutonia* passengers for several weeks their home in the King Bridge shops in Topeka. Those entirely out of funds remained in the East for a period to earn sufficient money to make a start on the western prairies the following year.

More unfortunate even than the Swiss was another group of

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH



Isaac Peters



Jacob Stuckey



Cornelius Jansen

Mennonites who lived in half a dozen villages near Ostrog, on the opposite side of Volhynia and in several other villages scattered about near by in old Poland. Those near Ostrog were under the ecclesiastical charge of elder Tobias Unruh, one of the delegates of 1873. These, too, were dairymen, small farmers, linen weavers and day laborers. They lived on Crown lands to which they had only a limited title, and on which they paid a yearly rental. When the Crown discovered that they were considering emigration, their lands were transferred to a Russian general who in turn had sold his rights to some Bohemian Catholics. This left the Mennonites nothing but their improvements with a very small equity in the use of the land. The Catholics were coming to take possession. The Mennonites consequently were forced to sell their improvements and equities at a sacrifice so great that many were reduced to actual poverty without sufficient means to pay their passage money. Those with means did not wish to leave without taking their poor with them, and seemingly did not have sufficient means to take care of the poor. Consequently they, too, appealed to the American committees for help. As early as February in 1874 a letter was sent to the Pennsylvania churches asking for help under the signatures of a number of ministers, Peter Richert, Benjamin Unruh, Peter Unruh, Andreas Unruh, Abraham Siebert, Henry Dirks, Benjamin Deckert and David Wedel. This letter requested the sum of \$40,000 to be distributed among the villages as follows: Karoldswalde, \$9,000; Jadweidenine, \$5,750; Fuerstendorf, \$5,400; Karoldsberg, \$2,750; Gnadenthal, \$2,550; Antonofka, \$11,000; Waldheim, \$3,600. The report of the Board of Guardians for November shows that passage money was furnished for seventy-five families of this group. Among others from Polish Russia who joined Unruh's colony in their trek to America were a number of members of the congregation at Michalin, near Machnofka, under the leadership of Elder Johan Schroeder. Many of these, too, were in great need.

Although it was late in the fall before these various Polish groups had completed their preparations for emigration, yet they preferred to face the midwinter storms of the Atlantic, rather

than suffer ejection from their homes. Seemingly they were the special charge of the Pennsylvania Aid Committee; for they took passage on the Red Star steamers. About two hundred and sixty-five families took passage at Antwerp late in November on three ships, the *Nederland*, *Vaderland*, and the *Abbottsford*. The voyage, coming as it did in midwinter, was an unusually trying one. The *Nederland* was seventeen days on the way, and the *Vaderland* twenty-one. The *Abbottsford* collided with a freighter a few days out from port, and after that smallpox broke out on the boat. Like the Pilgrims, they all landed a short time before Christmas, and though not a "rock bound coast" yet their prospects for the winter seemed hardly any less cheerless. Their arrival was unexpected, and no provision had been made to take care of them. At first the Pennsylvania Aid Committee had thought of keeping them in the East for the winter, but the task of caring for a thousand or more of indigent immigrants no doubt appalled them as a task beyond their capacity. Pleading the excuse that the tickets for the passengers had been purchased in Hamburg clear through to Kansas, the committee, on the suggestion of C. B. Schmidt of the Sante Fe sent the entire group with the exception of some fifty of the poorest families, on to their western destination where they were dumped on the plains of Kansas, and housed in empty store buildings for the winter in the prairie villages of Newton, Florence and Great Bend, with little provision for their comfort or convenience. Their means had about become exhausted. When they arrived at St. Louis they were without food, and evidently without the necessary means with which to buy any. Here Bernhard Warkentin, the secretary of the Mennonite Board of Guardians, supplied them with bread and other provisions. A local relief committee was immediately organized to provide for their wants during the winter. And here at the end of their long journey on the plains of Kansas they spent the winter, supported by the relief committee, waiting for spring when they might move on small farms which had to be supplied them from eastern funds.

It was during this year also that the Hutterites began the

emigration which within the next five years transplanted all their Bruderhofs² in the Crimea near Simferopol to the prairies of Dakota. The emigration of 1874 consisted of about forty families who arrived in New York about the middle of July, and together with a number of other Mennonites who landed at the same time were inveigled into going to Nebraska by one Michael Hiller whom we have already met as a representative of the Northern Pacific but now in the service of the Burlington and Missouri railroad. After several weeks at Lincoln, Nebraska, they found their way to Dakota where they settled two Bruderhofs—one on the Missouri near the old village of Bonhomme, and the other some thirty miles north along the James.

In the meantime such as had decided upon Canada as their future home were equally busy with their preparations for leaving. These were largely from three colonies—Bergthal, Fuerstenland, and the Kleine Gemeinde group at Borsenko, besides scattered additions from Chortitz and other regions. The Kleine Gemeinde colony was the first of these to leave in the year 1874. About one hundred families under the leadership of their two deputies of the year before left Borsenko in the middle of June. They were met at Bremen by a Mr. Klotz, representative of the Canadian government stationed at Hamburg, who feared that they might be misdirected by the agents of the American railroads, who also had representatives at the port of embarkation. They took passage on the Allan line and in due time arrived at Montreal. They reached Toronto on July 19, some sixty families. About thirty families had been induced by Cornelius Jansen, who had some relatives among them, to remain over at Clarence Center, New York, with a congregation of Mennonites at that place. Jansen had in the meantime become interested in some railroad land in Jefferson county, Nebraska, and wished his friends to examine this land before deciding on a place of settlement.

The main party was met at Toronto by the Mennonites of Ontario with provisions sufficient to last their Russian brethren

²An Anglicized plural, of course, is used here and elsewhere for this term instead of the German *Bruederhoeffe*.

the rest of the journey to Manitoba; for the contract with the Canadian government did not call for provisions beyond Toronto. Some of the newcomers had brought a limited supply of eatables from their Russian homes, but even these exhausted their bags of roasted *Zwieback* by the time they reached Moorehead, Minnesota. The party continued their way to Collinwood where they took a steamer for Duluth, thence by rail again on the Northern Pacific to Moorehead, the head of navigation on the Red river. Here they boarded the *International*, and started on the last stretch of their long journey. After several days on the crooked Red they landed their goods at the mouth of the Rat river some twenty miles below Winnipeg; but the passengers themselves continued to the end of the line. Here they bought utensils, oxen and wagons and such other equipment as they would need to start life on the open prairie; and incidentally had their pictures taken, upon the suggestion no doubt of the officials who were fostering the immigration movement. In a few days they returned to the mouth of the Rat from whence they laboriously transported their baggage, loaded on new wagons drawn by English broke oxen which understood neither Russian nor German, to the immigrant sheds that had been prepared for them seven miles away near the present town of Niverville, on the southwestern border of the eight townships that had been reserved for them.

Bergthal at this time included over two thousand people, distributed among a number of villages. They, too, decided to emigrate enmasse; and their reasons for choosing Manitoba, according to their elder Gerhard Wiebe, were because they desired to live under the jurisdiction of the Queen of England, placing more trust, perhaps, in a monarchical than a republican form of government; they were also influenced especially by the promise of the Canadian government to grant them military exemption and complete control over their schools and churches. Like the Alexanderwohlers and other groups that had decided to leave as a body, the Bergthalers found considerable difficulty in finding buyers for their property. The farms, although owned by individuals, had to be sold by villages. Russians were the only buyers. Consequently

it was only by selling at a great sacrifice that they were able to dispose of their property at all, and then not in time to secure any cash by the time of the first emigration in 1874. In order to carry out their plan of emigration they decided to divide into three parties, each to leave Russia a year apart beginning with 1874, and ending 1876; the first party to leave without waiting for their property to be sold; the second and last parties were to bring the sale money with them when they came. They hoped that in three years the whole matter might be cleared up. The first party left, therefore, with little cash except what they could get from the sale of a limited amount of their movable property and personal effects.

The Bergthal settlement was closely knit together not only as a religious, but as an economic and social group as well. They were not only a church congregation, but a local government unit, a school district, and a poor relief unit, with homes for both the poor and the orphans of their group. They decided that all would migrate, poor and rich alike. The rich were taxed a certain amount for the creation of a fund to pay for the passage across to America of the poor. All the debts owing to one another, and all mutual obligations would be transferred to their new home in America, and were to be paid as soon as they became established in their new home. All the annuities and investments of the orphan home, about one hundred thousand rubles in amount, was also to be brought with them to America; and also all obligations made in Russia in behalf of orphans were to be discharged in America so that the fatherless and widows would not lose a single "kopek." Elder Wiebe says in his account of this emigration that in all history he does not believe there is another instance where there was such a complete unanimity and harmony in everything taken up as in this colony.

The first contingent, consisting of some eight hundred souls, accompanied by one of their ministers, Henry Wiebe, and delegate in 1873, left Bergthal about a week after the departure of the Borsenko party. At Hamburg they were likewise carefully guarded by Mr. Klotz of the Canadian government, against any

possible evil designs of American agents. Crossing England they took passage at Liverpool on the Allan liner, the *Nova Scotia*, which arrived at Quebec early in August. From here they followed the same route taken by their Borsenko brethren the week before, and eventually reached their destination at the mouth of the Rat. It was of this party, no doubt, that the *St. Paul Daily Express* of August 6 reported "The longest passenger train ever passed over the Northern Pacific arrived here from Duluth with five hundred and ninety-five Mennonites on board. They left for Manitoba on the *Cheyenne*."

About the middle of September an additional group of about one hundred left Bergthal. These arrived at Quebec in October, but being poor and arriving late, they remained with the Ontario Mennonites during the winter, joining their brethren in Manitoba the next spring. Another small group of about one hundred from the Chortitz colony this fall brought the total of immigrants to Manitoba for the year to nearly 1,400.

The Fuerstenland colony which was about as large as Bergthal in Russia, and which also had decided to emigrate as a body did not leave until the next year, 1875; and then it began the new settlement west of the Red river in what later became known as the Western Reserve.

All the Mennonite arrivals thus far enumerated, it will be observed, came in large groups and consisted of entire villages and colonies. During the same time, too, there were scattered individuals from nearly every village who had attached themselves to these groups. The emigration fever had not struck all the communities alike: the fever, no doubt, depending somewhat upon the conservativeness of the people and the economic conditions, and especially, no doubt, upon leadership of their elders. The entire emigration for the year, therefore, was somewhat larger than indicated by the above groups. From the report of the Mennonite Board of Guardians of February, 1875, we gather the following statistics for the year 1874,—

There arrived in New York, Philadelphia and Quebec on the

various steamship lines the following number of families during the year :

Inman Line (Hamburg to N. Y.).....	300	families
Allan Line (Liverpool to Quebec).....	230	"
Red Star Line (Antwerp to Phila.)....	300	"
Hamburg-American (Hamburg to N. Y.).....	442	"
Adler Line	3	"

Total1275 families

These were distributed as follows:—

Dakota	200	families
Manitoba	230	"
Minnesota	15	"
Nebraska	80	"
Kansas	600	"
Remained in the East.....	150	"

There are a few discrepancies in the above reports as will be noticed, but they are not serious; and this represents no doubt nearly accurately the number who came during the year. The same committee in its report for November indicated that the following year they were expecting one thousand families more. In the above report it will be noticed that Kansas this first year received about half of all the Mennonites who came to America. Manitoba received the next highest number, and Minnesota and Nebraska received very few. Quite a number remained in the East too poor to get any farther. Counting about five persons to each family the entire number of souls emigrating this first year was about 6,375, a little over a third of the entire number who came during the entire emigration period.

VI.

LENDING A HELPING HAND

In the meantime, while the Mennonites of Russia were continuing their preparations for emigration, their brethren over here were as busily engaged in organizing such relief commissions, and collecting such funds as would be needed to successfully settle the new comers upon their western homes; for it was evident quite early in the history of the movement that both funds and friendly advice would be required. As early as the fall of 1873, the Western District Conference, through the influence of such men as Christian Krehbiel and others, appointed a relief committee for the collection of funds to aid the cause. At about the same time, John F. Funk of Elkhart, and other friends of the Russian immigrants secured the organization of a similar committee among the Old Mennonites of the middle west. Realizing that one committee could function better than two, the leaders of the two groups wisely combined their forces into one organization called the Mennonite Board of Guardians, with Christian Krehbiel as president; John F. Funk as treasurer; David Goerz, the Russian teacher of the parochial school at Summerfield, as secretary; and Bernhard Warkentin, who was to spend most of his time in New York, as agent. This organization played an important role in the entire emigration movement, and rendered the immigrants most valuable service.

The Pennsylvania Mennonites likewise, under the direction of such men as A. B. Shelly of the General Conference wing of the church, and Amos Herr of Lancaster county, representing the Old Mennonites, formed a union committee under the name of the Mennonite Executive Aid Committee. Among the Canadian Mennonites, J. Y. Schantz of Berlin, Ontario, effected a similar organization.

These various committees, with special representatives at the

ports of Hamburg and New York, and manifesting a fine spirit of co-operation, perfected an organization whose influence was felt from the plains of Manitoba and Kansas to the steppes of South Russia. Every detail of the long journey from the beginning to the end was carefully prescribed, and the safety and comfort of the immigrants provided for at every step of the way. At Hamburg, the Board of Guardians had stationed a certain Heinrich Schuett, a reliable Mennonite whose duty it was to meet the prospective immigrants as they arrived overland at that port of embarkation, and provide for all their necessary needs, such as changing Russian rubles to the coin of western Europe, or America if necessary; directing them to their proper ships; buying their tickets to New York, or perhaps in certain cases clear to their western destination; and protecting them against rival shipping companies, and unscrupulous rascals of all sorts. At New York, the new comers were again met by members of the committees, representatives of railroad companies with whom contracts for passage had been made, and later by friends and relatives who had preceded them. Contracts with both ship and railroad companies were made on much more favorable terms than could have been secured by the immigrants themselves.

The western Board of Guardians contracted with the Inman line which ran its ships from Hamburg to New York, and the Hamburg-American line operating between the same ports; the Pennsylvania Aid Committee had made an agreement with the Red Star Company, a line of Dutch steamers plying between Antwerp and Philadelphia; while the Canadians made use of the Allan line, operating from Hamburg, by way of Liverpool to Quebec. Practically the entire Mennonite immigration came over on the steamers of these three companies. The few who lost their way, or permitted themselves to be talked into trying some other ship company, usually found to their sorrow after it was too late that they had made a costly mistake. In order that those not entitled to these special rates might not impose upon the ship companies, as well as to expedite the passage of bona fide Mennonites, the Mennonite Board of Guardians in the late fall of 1873 distributed

a number of circulars throughout the Mennonite communities of South Russia with minute directions as to the method of procedure if they wished to take advantage of the special provisions made for them by the American committees.

American aid was not limited to advice, however, important as that may have been. It soon became evident that there would be need of considerable material assistance if all those desiring to emigrate were to have their wishes fulfilled. Some were poor to begin with; most of them found it difficult to realize much cash on such real estate as they were able to dispose of during the first year. During the year 1873, there were a number of appeals for help in such American periodicals as *The Herald of Truth*, and *Friedensbote*, especially from Tobias Unruh's congregation in Poland, and Jacob Stuckey's church in Volhynia, as well as from a certain Eckert of the Volga region, who said that most of those in his congregation who wished to emigrate were without the means to do so. A letter from the Bergthal colony appearing in the February issue of the *Friedensbote* states that up to that time, 1874, not a single farm had been sold but that preparations were continuing for emigration.

It is difficult to state accurately the amount of money that was actually collected and spent by the different relief organizations and by private individuals in behalf of the emigration movement; but casual notices gathered here and there from the Mennonite papers here will give us at least some idea of the extent of the aid offered. The financial report of the Mennonite Board of Guardians for September, 1874, indicates that by that time there had been deposited in the banks of New York for this work, \$17,021.21 by the Board of Guardians; \$15,000.00 by the Pennsylvania Committee; and \$10,000 by the Canadian Committee—a total of some \$42,000.00. In the October meeting, a call for \$20,000.00 from the Bergthal colony is reported. At the November session of the Board, arrangements were made for making loans to the immigrant poor for a period of five and six years at a moderate rate of interest. In the spring of 1875, the Dakota Swiss asked for a loan of \$6,000.00 which they later received

from their Pennsylvania brethren. The heaviest drain upon the financial resources of the relief committees was made, however, by the large number of poor who came from Poland in the winter of 1874-75. As already indicated, these were brought to Kansas in midwinter, many of them with insufficient clothing to withstand the rigors of even a Kansas winter, and nothing with which to buy provisions. The special relief committee which was organized to take care of this group reported in the spring that it was costing them at the rate of \$60 each day to provide for their physical needs. D. S. Holdeman, an active member of this local committee, estimated at the close of the first year, that about \$10,000 had been spent on this one congregation.

This committee which was later expanded to take care of the poor in all the groups, met frequently during the following year in the interest of relief work. William Ewert, in a session held April, 1875, outlined a relief program which it was hoped would solve the problem largely by providing the means of self-support as follows:

1. The able bodied were to secure as much work as possible near at hand.
2. As many as possible were to settle on cheap government land.
3. Loans were to be secured from wealthy Mennonites in the East to equip renters and homesteaders with stock and farm machinery.
4. The railroads should aid the cause by carrying a certain amount of this equipment free of charge.

Although the exact amount of money expended by these various committees during this period is not definitely known, yet it was perhaps not less than \$75,000.00; and if the free support given by the eastern Mennonites to the poor immigrants who were unable to pay their way to their western homes, and were cared for in the East for months at a time were counted, the total amount would be above \$100,000.

In the meantime, the Ontario Mennonites were equally busy

in relieving the needs of the poor among such immigrants as chose Manitoba for their prospective homes. The Bergthaler church, as already indicated, forced to sell without receiving any cash, and arriving during the grasshopper years of 1874-75, had little ready money with which to stock the farms given them by the Canadian government, nor with which to buy necessary provisions even for the first two years. Here, however, with a few exceptions, aid took the form largely of a loan made by the Canadian government, but bonded by such good friends as J. Y. Schantz and other wealthy and warmhearted Ontario Mennonites. Since this was a new policy for the Canadian government, the bill did not pass the House of Commons without considerable debate in which many of the members took advantage of the opportunity to express their opinions of the Mennonites. The bill was submitted by the prime minister, Mr. Mackenzie, who said it was prepared at the request of the Ontario Mennonites, who desired a loan of \$100,000 for the benefit of their Russian brethren, and that they would be personally responsible for the repayment of the entire amount. The bill was introduced February, 1875.

The objections to the bill were confined to only a few members. Among these was a certain Masson, from the district of Terrebonne, representing a French constituency, who based his objections on the ground that if the Government was going to subsidize immigrants, he preferred to encourage the return to Canada of such French as had migrated to the United States rather than spend money on foreigners. He offered an amendment to the bill providing that half of the proposed amount be devoted to the Mennonites, and the other half to the cause of the repatriation of French Canadians now in the United States.

This amendment precipitated an interesting debate on the value of the Mennonite as an immigrant. Most of the debaters spoke in highest terms of praise of the Mennonites as pioneers in the development of the West. One said that they were different from other settlers in that they usually came to stay and built permanent homes, whereas others would frequently move about from one place to another, never remaining long enough in

any one place to make much of a contribution to the building up of the country. Their success as colonists, he thought, was due to the fact that they were closely knit together by religious as well as social bonds, and in case of a crisis they would stand together shoulder to shoulder, thus weathering many storms which other settlers not united by this spirit of co-operation were not able to survive. All spoke highly, too, of their thrift and industry. A certain Mr. Laird, eulogizing these traits among them, said that he had become acquainted with the first group that had come to Manitoba, and that after their arrival they immediately set off for their lands. The next week some of them were back in Winnipeg selling butter. Campbell, a fighting Scotchman, was not sure that Canada should make any special concessions to the peaceful Mennonites who were opposed to war. He would rather offer special inducements to Scots and Irishmen who had no scruples against fighting. Farrow, on the other hand, favored the measure, stating that if the Mennonites were half as good as reported, the money would be well spent.

This bill with a few amendments was finally passed; and according to a report made by J. Y. Schantz in 1877 the total amount of the loan made to the Manitoba Mennonites was \$88,000.00, the payment of which was guaranteed by a group of Ontario Mennonites. This confidence placed by the Ontario Mennonites in their Russian brethren, whom they hardly knew, greatly impressed the members of the House of Commons and contributed not a little to the final passage of the measure. In addition to this loan from the Government, another loan of \$5,000 from private parties, together with several thousands in gifts brought the entire amount furnished by the year 1875 up to about \$100,000.00, every cent of which was repaid in due time, a feat which the Minister of Interior at the time said was unparalleled in the history of Canada. Other services rendered the Russian immigrants enroute through the East if transformed into dollars and cents would bring the entire total considerably higher.

The Moses of the Canadian immigration movement was William Hespeler, who, as we have already seen, had visited the con-

gregations of South Russia in 1872, as a representative of the Canadian government, inviting the prospective immigrants to settle in Manitoba. We have also seen him as a guide to the Committee of Twelve in their tour through Manitoba in 1873. Throughout the entire period, Hespeler was a staunch friend of the Mennonites in every need. He directed them to their new prairie homes when they arrived, looked after their comfort, represented them before the authorities at Ottawa when necessary, and became their adviser in every contingency. He later arrived at a position of considerable influence in political and financial circles in Winnipeg, and died not many years ago at a ripe age. The Canadian Immigration Department also had an agent at the port of Hamburg, a certain Jacob E. Klotz, whose business it was to see that no immigrants who were bound for Canada should be sidetracked to the United States by designing American agents. J. Y. Schantz, representing the Ontario Mennonites, also rendered his Russian friends invaluable service throughout the entire immigration period. Both he and Hespeler were granted a section of land in western Manitoba for their part in directing the Mennonites to that region.

Coming back now to this side of the boundary line, we find that not only the American Mennonites, but western railroad companies, and land departments of western states as well were all intensely interested in the immigration of the Russian Mennonites. This was just the time when the last western frontier was being developed. The panic of 1873, and the grasshopper plague of the years following had slowed up the progress of western development not a little; and so the prospect of securing some 40,000 skilled prairie farmers at this particular time who were afraid of neither grasshoppers nor hard times elicited considerable interest as well as rivalry among such states as still had large areas of undeveloped land. As early as 1872, the state legislature of Minnesota, influenced no doubt by the visit of the Canadian Hespeler to Russia, passed a formal resolution inviting the Russian Mennonites to settle in their state. The next year the Texas legislature considered a similar proposal. Within the next four

years, three states,—Kansas, Nebraska and Minnesota all passed laws exempting Mennonites from military duty as an inducement to settle within their boundaries.

The various railroad companies especially were carrying on a keen rivalry for settlers on their railroad lands. The Sante Fe which had just completed its road to western Kansas had in C. B. Schmidt, their colonization agent, who was a German, a most effective booster for Kansas lands. Schmidt did for Kansas what Hespeler did for Manitoba. Both were Germans and thus easily gained the confidence of the German speaking Russians. Schmidt made a visit to the colonies of South Russia in 1875 in the interests of the Sante Fe lands, but being suspected by the Russian police of aiding the emigration movement, he soon was forced to return. His visit to Russia may have had some results, but the tide to Kansas after 1874 was not as overwhelming as the heavy immigration of the first year led them to expect. The Sante Fe also had a representative as did the other companies in New York to meet the immigrant ships when they arrived. Immigrant sheds were erected upon the prairies for the temporary needs of the settlers. Passes over the road were granted a limited number of Mennonite leaders. Such as were especially influential among their people were sometimes offered the gift of a choice quarter or half section. A few fell for it; most of them resisted the temptation. Large congregations like Alexanderwohl and Hoffnungssau, as well as Hoffnungsfeld, which bought large compact areas were presented with several sections in addition to the amount they purchased for either church or school purposes. Sante Fe lands were sold the first year on easy terms, and at the reduced rate of from two and one-half to five dollars per acre, depending upon the fertility of the soil and the distance from the railroad. For several years, freight rates were reduced ten per cent. or more, a reduction which the company said wiped out all the profit. In some cases, freight was carried for a limited time without any cost to the settler ¹.

¹Rev. H. R. Voth who was one of the *Cimbria* passengers tells the following very interesting story in this connection:

When the first group landed in New York on the *Cimbric* we were met by several representatives of different roads, among whom I remember C. B. Schmidt of the Sante Fe, and Mr. P. Jansen of what I think was then called the Burlington & Quincy Railroad. This group had decided to go to Nebraska, but as far as Chicago Mr. C. B. Schmidt had charge of it. Here we were transferred late in the evening on busses under the care of the C. B. & Q. Railway, Mr. Jansen acting as interpreter, to the depot of that road, where an immigrant train stood ready. Our leaders urgently requested that Mr. C. B. Schmidt, whose interest in and kind treatment of us had won the confidence and friendship of all, be allowed to remain with us. This was flatly refused. So he took the regular passenger train, and when we arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska, Mr. Schmidt was on hand at the depot, of course entirely unofficially. Here we were quartered in a large building on the fair grounds outside of the city. Our people soon began to buy cook-stoves and to cook and bake. This and many other details I remember very well because, having taken up the study of English in Russia already, I had to act as interpreter for the many small groups that went to the city to make purchases, especially, of course, groceries.

A committee of, I think, five brethren was elected to look up a location for our new homes. First, of course, the land of the C. B. & Q. Ry. was inspected under the guidance of Mr. Touzalin and Mr. P. Jansen. But having promised Schmidt that no decision would be made until the Sante Fe had had a chance to show us what they had to offer, the committee also went to Kansas, where under the guidance of C. B. Schmidt and probably others different locations in the counties of Harvey, McPherson, and Marion were inspected. In the meantime the C. B. & Q. had been compelled to put up a large building for us, as the first one was needed for a fair. The nights being cool and many cook stoves having been put up, the company furnished us with all the necessary fire wood. I was learning English "par force." Often when returning from town with one group, another group met us, and I had to return with that, and finally even had a position of clerk in a store.

When our committee returned from Kansas the "pal-

avers" with Mr. Touzalin and Jansen began. In front of our barracks was seated the committee; in front of them in an open buggy stood Mr. Touzalin and Mr. Jansen—interpreter; and around the large crowd. It was a memorable moment, because it was now to be determined where our future homes would be. It being the first time that I had heard a discussion like this in both languages you may imagine that I was "all ear," and followed the conversation with rapt attention. It very soon became apparent that the inclination of the committee was towards Kansas, and Mr. Touzalin wanted to know why. Now whether I can give the following facts exactly in the original chronological order I do not know, but that is immaterial. These facts were discussed:

1. One reason the committee gave for preferring Kansas was that the Kansas lands were covered with fine grass, and we would be able to make all the hay for the winter there yet. Permit me to say that different members of the committee occasionally spoke, although Rev. H. Richert was our principal spokesman, and hence I will here use his name, not remembering just who brought up the different points. "You tell Mr. Richert," Mr. Touzalin promptly replied, "that the C. B. & Q. Railway will furnish all the hay needed for the winter free of charge."
2. Another point was, in Kansas we could get fine water at small depths while in the lands shown our committee in Nebraska the wells were deep. Mr. Touzalin: "You tell Mr. Richert, the C. B. & Q. will either drill a well and put in a pump on every quarter section of land, or make a well and put up a windmill on every section."
3. Third objection: A sandy stretch of land between the lands where we were to be located in Nebraska and the towns on which we would be dependent. "You tell Mr. Richert that the C. B. & Q. will build a plank road (temporarily I suppose) between the settlement and the different towns. There were probably a few other objections but it would take too much space to record them."

Then Mr. Touzalin began to make offers some of which I can only mention briefly. The company would erect temporary quarters on the land. A train load of freight (mostly crated wagons) that was lying in Philadelphia his company would haul free of charge to the settlement. For all the lumber, coal, grain etc., that we

might need the company would charge no freight. To a designated committee that the settlers might want to send to make purchases railroad passes would be furnished. To all of these Mr. Schmidt who stood among the spectators replied that the Sante Fe would do the same. Just how he communicated this information to the committee I do not remember, whether by a quiet messenger or by a prearranged signal I do not know; but the fact was related to me later by my uncle Richert, and also by Mr. C. B. Schmidt himself with whom I talked these matters over in later years.

Finally came the question of the price and terms for the land. Mr. Touzalin made various offers, each one better than the preceeding one, Mr. Schmidt quietly meeting every one of them, until Mr. Touzalin said: "You tell Mr. Richert that the C. B. & Q. will give them the necessary land for nothing." This Mr. Schmidt did not meet. He said later to Onkel Richert, and repeated the same to me when we talked this over in later years, that he then already saw that we were coming to Kansas, and that that much he wanted to gain for the Sante Fe, although his instructions had been: "You bring those Mennonites at any cost."

When Mr. Richert asked Mr. Touzalin what his company would charge us for the expenses that they had had with us in case we went to Kansas, he replied, "Not a cent." But when he was asked whether they would charter us a special train for Topeka he said, "No sir, if the Sante Fe wants you they will have to get you." So one fine morning a Sante Fe special was backed into a switch near the barracks, and by far the larger part of this group went to Topeka, to the great regret of Mr. Touzalin and Mr. Jansen.

In Topeka we were housed in the same King Bridge shops where the Gaeddert group was "housed." We all lived strictly in one room; the floor was covered with new boards. The Sante Fe had promised that anything we might purchase here, stock, machinery, household goods, etc., they would haul to the West free of charge. And the farmers did bring the stuff into the big yards of the shops. I again had to act as interpreter from "early till late," the best school I ever had. But one time I was up

against it, when a man wanted me to find out when that cow would be "fresh," but I found it out. Many of the "town folks" visited this unique camp, especially on Sundays, and often they pointed to the place where our family camped on the floor, to find out details about many things from me as the only one who could speak (some) English. I shall never forget how a gentleman one time patted me on the back and said, "Oh, you will be a Senator some day."

In Lincoln we had been about three weeks. Here again we had to wait several weeks until the locations could be definitely made and the large emigrant houses finished in which many of our men assisted. In our large "house" cooking, baking, sewing, washing, etc., was going on every day. In the middle of the building stood in a straight line the cook stoves; one time I counted 129 of them. A switch had been laid into the building on which the company backed in one load of fire wood after another, and hauled out the articles that had been purchased. Horses and wagons, if I remember right, were shipped earlier and used in the West to haul material. It was a great day when finally we boarded a special and arrived at Newton and other towns and were transported by wagons to our settlement where we again lived side by side on the floors for several months until our houses could be finished. In the meantime the men were busy on their farms digging wells, cellars, making hay, and otherwise making preparations for the approaching winter.

In Nebraska, the Missouri & Burlington railroad offered terms quite similar to those of the Sante Fe in Kansas—immigrant houses, reduced freight rates, gifts, passes, reduced price of lands. A. E. Touzalin was the representative of this company. In Minnesota the lands offered by the Sioux City & St. Paul were higher than in the other states because that region was already more thickly settled. The Northern Pacific, with which the delegates had made the optional contract in 1873, and which it was thought might receive the major portion of the immigrants, was soon out of the race; for not a single immigrant chose to locate in northern Minnesota or Dakota.

STATE RIVALRIES

By the end of the first year, 1874, it seemed that Kansas would likely receive by far the larger part of the entire number of immigrants. During this year, more came to that state than all the others combined. Dakota came next, with Minnesota receiving only fifteen families. All the other states now redoubled their activities in behalf of their own lands, and concentrated their attacks against Kansas. Touzalin of the Burlington & Missouri secured the signatures of most of the settlers who had located in 1874 in Jefferson and surrounding counties to a circular in which the virtues of Nebraska as well as the shortcomings of Kansas and other states were vigorously set forth, and which was meant for circulation in Russia among the prospective immigrants for the following year. According to this circular, these settlers had chosen the lands of the Burlington & Missouri in Nebraska, only after a careful investigation of all the available locations offered in other states. Dakota, they say, did not suit them because of lack of good water and stony soil; and besides, the region where a settlement had been started was near a large Indian reservation. Indian corn, too, which is an important product in America could not be raised to advantage because of the extreme cold. Dakota was also handicapped by the fact that it was not yet a full fledged state, being still in the territorial stage. The territory could be reached by only one short railroad. The lands offered were mostly homesteads; and homesteaders must become United States citizens before they could qualify as land owners. This the Nebraska settlers were not quite willing to do, inasmuch as citizenship and military service seemed closely connected. In Nebraska, on the other hand, so they continue, this is not necessary in the case of the cheap lands bought from the railroad company. During the recent war, thousands here were exempt from military duty on this account, without losing their right to vote in school matters and other local affairs. The only limitation placed upon the suffrage of the non-citizens was the inability to vote for state officials, and this, the Nebraska Mennonites contend, "We do not care for anyway."

As for Kansas, that state is too hot and dry for successful farming. The settlers, too, are entirely at the mercy of a single railroad company for the marketing of their goods, which in course of time may become a serious handicap in case the company decides to charge exorbitant rates. As for the militia exemption of which the Kansas settlers boast so much, that is not of great value, because in case of war, military matters are regulated by the Federal government; and at any rate, religious freedom is guaranteed in the Federal constitution.

In reply to numerous reports that are derogatory to the state of Nebraska, the circular declares that in Nebraska water can be easily secured from drilled wells at a low cost; for those that wish it, government land can still be secured farther west, although in that case, citizenship is required. Good land at a cost of from two to four dollars can still be had in any quantity, land good for wheat, trees, corn, potatoes, and "Arbusen."

In an appendix to this circular, which was printed in 1875, Cornelius Jansen, who in the meantime had bought two sections from the railroad company in Jefferson county, included a letter to his friends in Russia in which he declares that without doubt, Nebraska is the best agricultural state west of the Missouri, both because of its geographical location and direct railroad connections with eastern markets. Jansen seemingly is not so much concerned about boosting his own state as about warning his friends against Kansas. Such as do not care for Nebraska, he says, can find other northern states open to prospective immigrants, so that it is not necessary to go to the hot drouth ridden Southwest Kansas. None of the Committee of Twelve, he maintains, decided for Kansas in 1873, although some of them followed their congregations to that state later on. That is sufficient evidence that the state was not regarded very highly at the time. The first settlers were inveigled into settling in Kansas by special inducements and easy terms offered by the Sante Fe Railroad Company. These then induced their friends in the following years to follow them.

The Minnesota pioneers were not far behind their Nebraska brethren in the zeal shown for the virtues of their native state,

and the shortcomings of others. In 1877 Franz Toews, and twenty-one other settlers, at the instigation, no doubt, of the Sioux City & St. Paul Railroad Company, sent a printed appeal to their friends in Russia, in which they recount the advantages of their adopted state, and especially deny certain derogatory rumors that evidently had been put into circulation in South Russia by their rivals. Contrary to rumors, they are enjoying great freedom in Minnesota, they declare. They are not compelled to vote nor work on the roads as has been reported. They may either pay their road tax, or work it out as they wish. Taxes in general are not high. The poor are allowed an exemption of \$200.

As for the advantages to the farmers, Minnesota surpasses other states. Cattle here are fed on grass while in Kansas and Nebraska they must be fed on corn. The country is beautiful, diversified with many beautiful small lakes well stocked with fish. The climate is not as cold as usually reported. In fact, frosts often occur earlier in Kansas and Nebraska than in Minnesota. This proves that the cold winds come from the western mountains, and not from the North as in Russia. Corn planted as late as June still has time to mature in the fall. Hay may be cut as late as November. There is still plenty of Congress land to be had for nothing, while other land may be had at from \$4 to \$6 per acre with ten years' time in which to pay. Minnesota also now has a good law exempting from militia service, so that Kansas is no longer the only state that is able to boast of this advantage.

The *Daily Press and Dakotan* of Yankton in one of its issues in the early part of 1874 bewailed the fact that Dakota did not have its big railroad companies to advertise the merits of Dakota among the Mennonites of Russia as did other states. These railroad companies, the paper says, spend thousands of dollars where Dakota spends one on advertising. As an example of unfavorable reports which had been spread broadcast about the territory, the case is cited of a Russian settler who had received a letter a short time before from his friends in Russia in which the writer stated that it was reported among his people that Yankton had sunk, that the people in the region near by were starving, and that war

with the Indians was inevitable. This story must have emanated, so thinks the editor of the *Dakotan*, from some of the confidence men employed by the great railroad companies in the West that have lands to sell. The favor Dakota is receiving excites their envy, he thinks.

But if the railroad companies did not boost Dakota, she had other agencies which were loud in singing her praises. This was an active period everywhere of railroad building, booming of cities, and rushing in of settlers. And so all through the West, land departments, real estate speculators, and especially the frontier press were active in boosting their respective states and territories. Dakota was as well represented by these boosters as any other region. Sometimes enthusiastic promoters saw wealth and beauty not so easily discerned by those not directly interested in the immediate locality. The *Dakota Herald*, in one of its issues in this same year, extolling the natural beauties of southeastern Dakota, tells of a visitor who had come to the capital city, Yankton, from Elk Point in the interior. This visitor from the Point evidently must have been possessed of considerable artistic talent; for greatly enraptured with the scenic beauties of the low swampy bluffs along the muddy Missouri, he speaks of the region there about as possessing a charm that is unexcelled even by Yosemite or other western parks, and wonders why painters from the East do not come to Yankton for subjects for their pictures.

Such rumors of calamities as reported above were not confined to Dakota, however. William Ewert of Kansas relates a similar rumor that at one time was spread among his friends in Prussia to the effect that the whole Mennonite settlement in Kansas had been wiped out by the Indians. The men had all been killed and the women carried away into captivity. In his reply to his Prussian friends, Ewert reminded them that it would be more likely that Berlin would be wiped out by the Turks than that the Indians should harm any of the Kansas settlements. And yet when we remember that this was just the time of the Indian unrest on the border, culminating in such catastrophes as the Custer massacre, we are not surprised that such reports should be current

in Russia, given wide publicity no doubt by the enemies of the emigration movement.

That these conflicting reports from the Mennonites of the different states should cause considerable confusion among the Mennonites of Russia is, of course, evident. The editor of *Zur Heimath* in the issue of July, 1875, speaking of this matter, suggests that the printed circulars from Mennonites in different states which are sent to Russia, and in which each group pictures the advantages of its own state, and condemns all the others, and sometimes even engaging in personal charges, does not help the Mennonite cause either in America or Russia.

It is not surprising either that in these charges and counter-charges some of the leaders of the movement should occasionally fall under suspicion. In a letter written to the editor of *Zur Heimath* from Russia, and appearing in the November, 1875, issue, the writer says that private letters from America accuse elder Isaac Peters, and preacher Heinrich Richert of Kansas of being land agents who are allowed a commission of 25% on all land sales made through them. Peters is even made out to be a prevaricator of the truth, since he should have said that in Dakota the grasshoppers had destroyed everything, causing a famine there. These letters are given wide publicity in Russia, the writer continues, and are the source of much division of opinion since some believe them, while others do not.

Editor Goerz, in an editorial, clears both Peters and Richert of all the charges made against them, but laments the fact that so many unreliable letters should be sent to Russia. How much better it would be, he says, if some of these letters could be sunk in the depths of the sea where the water is deepest.

CONTINUED IMMIGRATION FROM 1875-1879

Aided and directed by these various organizations, the immigration movement continued its course uninterrupted during the years immediately following; though in the United States at least, it never again assumed the proportions of the first year.

Complete and detailed records of the movement are not available, but from the files of such Mennonite papers of the time as the *Herold of Truth*, *Zur Heimath*, and *Friedensbote*, we can gather a fairly satisfactory estimate of the immigrant flow to the United States and Canada during the late seventies. The following fragmentary notices are taken from the papers mentioned.

From the May, 1875 issue of the *Zur Heimath*, we learn that fourteen families of indigent Poles, accompanied by their elder Benjamin Unruh, had arrived unexpectedly at New York, and being without means, were sent by the Mennonite Board of Guardians to the Mennonite congregation at Tipton, Missouri, to earn sufficient money for further migration. The June issue of the same periodical reports between June 1 and 14, the arrival of twelve poverty stricken families of Peter Eckert's church on the Volga. Three of these were sent to fellow Russians in Detroit; three, to the Mennonite congregations at Metamora, Illinois; and the remainder to Kansas. On June 21, fourteen more of the Eckert congregation landed in New York, eight of whom were sent to Gnadenu, Kansas; and the rest to Holmes county, Ohio, temporarily. A week later, nine more families of the same group were dropped off at Bluffton, Ohio.

These stragglers were followed later in the summer by several large groups under the leadership of Abraham Harms, Peter Harms and Frank Toews. On the 25th of July, the *Nederland* of the Red Star Line docked at New York with five hundred Mennonites on board; and was followed on August 4, by the *State of Nevada* with five hundred seventy. Of these about ninety-five families went to Minnesota, sixty-five to Kansas, and twenty each to Dakota and Nebraska. Speaking of the contingent that went to Kansas, C. B. Schmidt, who accompanied them to that state from New York, reported them as being of a decidedly religious and devout turn. Much of their time enroute they spent singing hymns, and reading their Bibles. One of them, Schmidt said, pointed out to him a passage in Isaiah which prophesied this very emigration from Russia to Kansas.

The entire immigration to the United States during this year

was about 1,400 souls, quite a small number as compared with the 5,225 of the year before.

In Manitoba, on the other hand, the immigration of 1875 was greatly in excess of that of the previous year. The arrivals included a large second contingent of the Bergthal colony with their elder Gerhard Wiebe; a considerable number from the old Chortitz congregations and especially a large group from the Fuerstenland settlement which located on a new reserve of seventeen townships west of the Red river, and after this known as the Western Reserve to distinguish it from the settlement on the east side. From the Winnipeg papers we gather a few details of this movement. The *Free Press* of July 14 reports that fifty-three families had arrived in Manitoba on the *International*, and accompanied by J. Y. Schantz had landed at West Lynne, the stopping place for those who located on the Western Reserve. Some of these also continued to the Rat river settlement.

The *Duluth Tribune* of July 15 reports that the steamer *Quebec* had arrived on the preceding Thursday with four hundred sixty Mennonites on board. These spent Wednesday in the town making various purchases, and to the great delight to the merchants "distributed bright golden coin among them" which was rather scarce in those frontier towns in the panic and grasshopper years of the middle seventies. This is undoubtedly the same party that the *Moorehead Red River Star* reports as having arrived the preceding Saturday with their interpreter J. Y. Schantz who "disappointed both the merchants of the town as well as the Mennonites by forbidding them to purchase any farm utensils in Moorehead, but advised them to wait until their arrival in Winnipeg before laying in a supply of the things they might need." A few days later, another large group arrived at Moorehead to take passage on the Red river for Manitoba. The Mennonites by this time were evidently getting on the nerves of the Moorehead editor, for in an editorial appearing on July 24, under the caption of "The Rare Mennonite," he complains that they have had Mennonites for breakfast, Mennonites for dinner, and Mennonites for supper. After describing their peculiar dress, their

peculiar customs, their "half Quaker belief" and their frugality, he finds compensation for all these peculiarities, nevertheless, in the fact that they "have the shiners in endless bags." Babies and money seemed the most conspicuous Mennonite possessions to impress the natives all along the route from Duluth, through Moorehead and Fargo to Winnipeg.

While those from the Fuerstenland colony settled on the Western Reserve, the Bergthalers continued to locate with their brethren on the Rat river settlement. They continued to come into Manitoba all through the late summer and fall. J. Y. Schantz estimated that by August 12, eighteen hundred had settled on the west side of the river alone, and that by the end of the year, four thousand had been added to the entire Mennonite population of the Province on both sides of the river.

By the close of 1875, the big rush was over on both sides of the international boundary line, though Mennonites continued to come each year for some time in groups both large and small. Mr. Klotz, the representative of the Canadian government at Hamburg, reported for the year 1876 that only 1,349 passed through Hamburg that year bound for Canada, including the final contingent of the Bergthal group, who brought the money for their farms with them; but even that was much better than he had expected at the beginning of the year. Among the reasons given for the falling off of this year were bad crops in South Russia, grasshoppers in Manitoba, and designing agents from the United States who were trying to give Manitoba a black eye. The latter could not have been a very potent cause, however, for these "designing" agents secured even fewer immigrants for their own country during the year. The season in the United States began early this year. In the forepart of January, the steamer *City of Montreal* landed some two hundred more of Peter Eckert's destitute church from the Volga, including this time Peter himself. Twenty-four of these were left at Bluffton, Ohio, and the rest sent to Kansas, half of them under Elder Hahnhart going to Pawnee Rock, the other half under Eckert himself to Gnadenau. In July there were several more small groups including a company of twenty-one

families from Prussia who came on the *Rhine*. Most of these latter located temporarily in Iowa. One big shipload of five hundred forty-one on the *Vaderland* arrived at Philadelphia, July 27.

The year 1877 showed a still further drop in the number of arrivals. Manitoba received only one hundred eighty-five all told, while about eight hundred were added to the settlements in the United States. The approaching war with Turkey made it difficult, though desirable, to leave Russia, while the decline of the Russian ruble from seventy-five cents in 1874 to thirty-five cents in 1877 made it increasingly difficult for Mennonites to realize anything more than a fraction of the real value of the property which they sold. The demand, too, for farms had reached by this time the saturating point. For four years the market had been glutted by an oversupply of cheap farms sold at ruinously low prices. But by this time, the demand had been satisfied, and it was difficult to dispose of real estate at any price. Rather bitter antagonisms had developed, too, in the meantime between those who desired to emigrate and such as were satisfied to remain; these latter were especially bitter against America. Many of those, dissatisfied with America, but at the same time desirous of escaping the substitute service to be inaugurated in 1880, now headed an emigration movement to the Causasus. Very few, however, actually found their way to this region.

During the last two years of grace, 1878-79, such as had been delaying emigration in the hope that at the last minute the Russian government might restore their former privileges, but finally convinced that there was no longer ground for hope, took the inevitable step by selling out their belongings and joining their brethren on our western prairies. Among the groups who came during these years, was a party of one hundred six families which arrived on the steamer *Strasburg*, of the North German Lloyd line, at New York, July 1, 1878. Of these, thirty-five families went to Kansas, thirty-four to Nebraska, twenty-nine to Minnesota, and eight to Dakota. The last large group arrived in June, 1879, on the steamer *Switzerland* of the Red Star line. It had on board seven hundred twenty-six Mennonites from the Molotschna colony

under the leadership of Franz Toews, Cornelius Regier, Julius Friesen, and David Hiebert. Of these, sixty-four families settled in Nebraska, forty-two in Kansas, fourteen in Minnesota, and seven in Dakota. The immigrants to Manitoba for 1878 numbered three hundred twenty-three, and for the year 1879 only two hundred forty-eight.

With the close of this latter year, the ten-year period granted for free emigration came to an end; and although after this there were annually some few immigrants for some time to come, yet the emigration movement as a whole practically came to an end. In 1884, some twenty-five families from the ill-fated Chiva expedition, a Russian group who had sought both military exemption and the coming of the Lord in the wilderness of Turkestan, arrived and located near Beatrice, Nebraska, and Newton, Kansas.

It should not be forgotten that during all this time, there were large groups of non-Mennonite German colonists from Russia who were finding homes in the United States in practically the same general regions where the Mennonites settled in Kansas, Nebraska, and Dakota. These came, too, as did the Mennonites to escape the program of Russianization adopted by Russia in 1870, although they did not claim any conscientious scruples against military service. Their number was perhaps smaller than that of the Mennonites.

Summing up the entire number of Mennonite immigrants who came to America during the ten-year period following 1874, it would perhaps not be far from correct to place the estimate at about 18,000; of whom about 10,000 located within the United States, and 8,000 within Manitoba. J. Y. Schantz in a report of 1879 estimates the number of immigrants to Manitoba by that time at 7,383; but during the next few years, perhaps enough more came to bring the number to the amount stated above. These total figures include some fifty families of Prussians who emigrated from Prussia for the same reason that drove out the Mennonites from Russia; for Prussia in 1867 had adopted a policy of universal military service with optional non-combatant service for Mennonites similar to that of Russia. Not included here, however, are the

Halstead group of Summerfielders, nor the seventy-five families of Galicians who arrived in the middle eighties; nor the twenty odd families of Swiss direct from their native land some time later. Neither do these statistics include about one thousand native Mennonites of various branches who had located in the West from the eastern states. Of the entire number of Russian Mennonites in the United States, about half were found in Kansas, the other half being distributed throughout the other states mentioned. Those on this side of the international boundary line were nearly all from the Molotschna colony, with a small number from Saratov, Samara, and Sagraodofka. The Manitobans came principally from the old colony, Chortitz, and her three daughter colonies of Berghthal, Fuerstenland, and Borsenko.

It is perhaps needless to suggest that the uprooting of several thousand families from their well established and comfortable homes, their transfer across some five thousand miles of land and sea, and their settlement upon wild and untenanted prairie lands could not be accomplished without many a heartache, real hardship, and an occasional mishap. It was currently reported at the time that the whole project was accomplished without any serious accident. This does not mean, of course, that there was not an occasional tragedy. From various newspaper accounts of that day, we read here and there of individuals meeting with disaster—old men and women succumbing to the fatigue of the long journey; young people falling into the water; and children dying of epidemics.

As every where else in the tragedies of life, so here also women and children bore the heaviest burdens. The processes of nature do not make way for the conveniences of men. Birth, disease, and death—these know neither time nor place. Children were born at every stage of the journey—at railway stations, and on railway trains; on ocean steamships, and river boats; in immigrant sheds, as well as in the first rude prairie cabins.

Child mortality, too, was often high. Improper food, exposure to heat and cold, neglect of the usual sanitary precautions due to the exigencies of months of travel on immigrant ships and

trains—all these took their toll of child life. The Swiss Volhynians while temporarily encamped at Peabody, Kansas, left many of their children in the local graveyard due to an epidemic that had broken out among them. Solomon Krehbiel, one of their number, lost three out of a family of four. This was by no means an isolated case. Something of the heartache that must have been the lot of many a family is suggested by a brief extract from the diary of one of the Alexanderwohl immigrants of 1874:

September 3: Because of lack of money, we had to stay over one day in Castle Garden. In the evening, little Helena was very sick. Died in the hospital at 10 o'clock.

September 4: Wrote a number of letters home. Made the last exchange of money. Little Agatha very sick. Died at 5 o'clock. Both children left in Castle Garden. Pastor Neuman will bury both free of charge. At 5 o'clock, packed up every thing. At 6 o'clock entered the little boat for shore. In the evening went over to the railroad station, and in the morning we were away from the little ones, God knows how far.

VII.

ESTABLISHING FRONTIER HOMES**KANSAS**

In the last two chapters, we discussed the breaking up of many of the Mennonite communities in Russia, and their emigration to America, in the years immediately following 1873. It will be the province of this and succeeding chapters to follow these immigrants to their rude dwellings on the prairies along the frontier, and share with them some of the hardships of their pioneer life during the first years. Settlements being made in various localities along the frontier, it will be most convenient to describe them by states. We shall begin with the state containing the largest and most important groups,—Kansas.

As already indicated, the first Russian Mennonite settlement in this state was made in the fall of this year, 1873, along the Cottonwood, near Marion Center by a group of colonists from Crimea. This location had been decided upon after a rather thorough investigation by the Crimeans of the lands offered in other states. Christian Krehbiel, who already had his heart set on Kansas and with whom these first immigrants were in close touch at Summerfield, no doubt had considerable influence in determining the final selection of this site. Among those who were included in this party of settlers were Jacob and Peter Funk, Johan Fast, and Heinrich Flaming. The remainder of the Crimean company located in Minnesota and Dakota in the fall of this same year. About the same time, several other families were added to this little colony—Rudolf Riesen with his family, J. J. Funk, and Abraham Quiring. David Goerz, Riesen's son-in-law, was also one of the Riesen party, but did not locate with the rest on the Cottonwood, being retained by the Summerfield church as a teacher in their parochial school. The Funks, Peter and Jacob, bought two adjoining sections of railroad land together with

some improved homesteads. On one of these, Peter, the next spring built a fine house, with stone that was found in great abundance to the east of the settlement. This building, which is still standing today as substantial as ever, perhaps the oldest of the houses erected by the Russian Mennonites in Kansas, became the temporary rendezvous in the years that followed for many of the immigrants to this section. More than once both house and stable were filled to overflowing with home-sick Russians, who had found a welcome stopping place here for a few days while they were erecting their permanent homes on the raw prairies near by.

In the spring of 1874, Wilhelm Ewert, the Prussian deputy of the year before, together with two other Prussians, Franz Funk, and Cornelius Jantz, also located in this neighborhood. With the coming of Ewert, who was an elder, a church was organized which was called **Bruderthal** after three brothers whose farms joined the place where the organization was perfected. Other families from Russia joined this little community in the following years. By 1878, a small circular printed by the Sante Fe Railroad Company gives the population of the Bruderthal congregation as eighteen families.

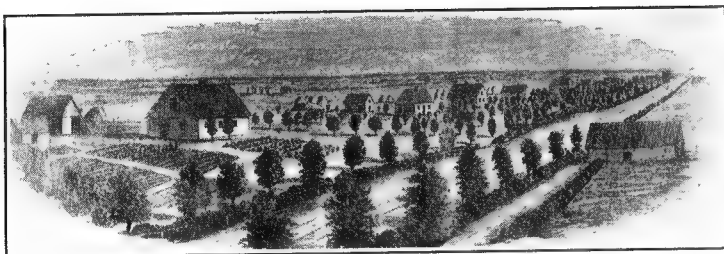
Jacob Remple, as indicated in a previous chapter, bought a tract of land of five thousand acres in Morris county even earlier. Together with four other families, he moved on to these lands in the following spring, but no congregation was ever formed there. Most of the first settlers later moved elsewhere.

The next group of settlers in Kansas was the company of Krimmer Brethren, about thirty-five families, under their Elder, Jacob Wiebe. After several weeks of land seeking in Nebraska and Kansas, the leaders of the party decided upon a location near Bruderthal, about fifteen miles northwest of Peabody. Here they purchased twelve sections of railroad land, and sent to Elkhart for their families. While awaiting the rest of the company at Peabody, Elder Wiebe and his party leaders had many misgivings as to the prospects for the future. The hot August winds driving sand and dust through the bare streets of the village, the dried-up prairie grass, the few wheat fields which could be seen on an

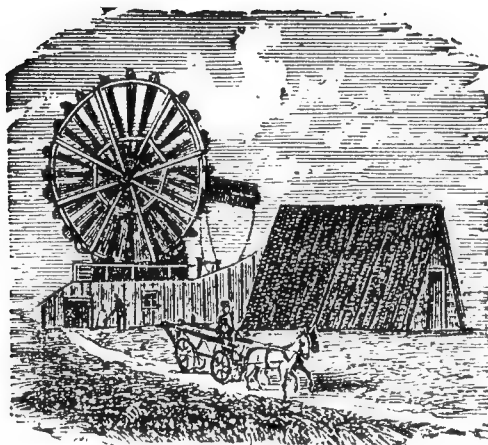
occasional homestead, all eaten up by grasshoppers—these gave the elder sufficient cause to doubt the wisdom of the choice they had made. But the die had been cast, and they had to make the most of it. Their families arrived at Peabody on August 16. The next day, although Sunday, they started over the prairies in a northwesterly direction for the region which they had chosen for a permanent home, some fifteen miles away, near the present town of Hillsboro, but at that time raw prairie for miles in every direction.

The Bruderthal brethren had come to help transport their fellow-immigrants and their belongings to the bare site of their new homes with ox carts and wagons. Elder Wiebe, however, had purchased a team and wagon of his own at Peabody. Loading up his wagon with a few necessary farm implements, a limited supply of provisions, and sufficient lumber to erect a temporary hut, and placing his family on top of all, he started out across the barren prairies to found a home. After driving a full half day through tall dry grass, and over an uncharted and uninhabited waste without the least sign of trail or road, he finally reached the place where he had driven a stake a few days before to mark the site of their prospective village. The elder brought his team to a stop. His wife with a look of anxiety on her face asked, "Why do we stop here?" "Here we will live," he replied. Mrs. Wiebe began to weep.

Barren prairie in every direction as far as the eye could see; not a sign of a neighborly house anywhere; no inviting roads leading to well known places; no friendly trees; no sociable herds of cattle; not a familiar sound except the shrill chirp of the cricket, and grasshopper, and the mournful whistling of the hot winds as they blew across the sun-burnt prairies. Nothing but seared grass and browned prairie flowers, and a far flung skyline in every direction. Not even a roof over her head to shelter her from the hot rays of a burning August sun, or a possible summer shower; nor even the promise of one beyond the possibilities that lay in the few sticks of wood not yet unloaded from Elder Wiebe's wagon. Was it for this that she had left her comfortable home in



The Eastern Half of Gnadenu in 1878

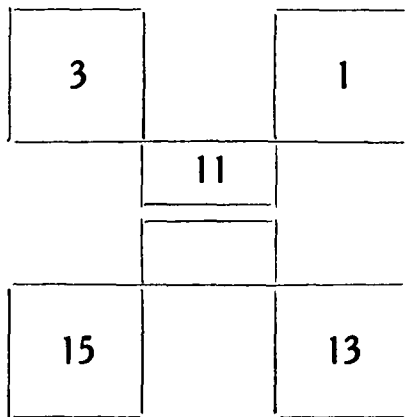


The Old Gnadenu Mill

the beautiful village of Annafeld, amid the green fields near Simferopol? Was it for this that she had spent six weary months in travel over land and sea? No wonder Mrs. Wiebe wept; and she was not the only woman in the party who wept that day.

A number of other families in the party camped out on the prairie that first night. Some found temporary shelter in the barn of the widow of Peter Funk at Bruderthal. Here one of their number, mother Cornelson, died, the first of their group in America.

These sturdy pioneers lost no time, however, in nursing vain regrets. They had sacrificed too much already to be discouraged by their poor prospects. They went to work immediately erecting their first crude dwelling places, digging a few wells to obtain a water supply for their cattle as well as for themselves, cutting dry prairie hay for the winter's fodder, breaking sod for the following years as well as putting in a little wheat on rented plowed ground for the next year's supply of bread. Being accustomed to village life in Russia, they decided to introduce the same type of farm life here, and so built a village which they appropriately called **Gnadenau**. The first farms were distributed over five sections, but since the railroad land could be had only in alternate sections, the land area which they cultivated the first few years took this form—



Their rude houses were all placed along a road which was cut right through the middle of the center section, which happened to be number 11. This section was then divided into as many strips as there were houses clear across the section on both sides of the street, some two dozen. The houses then were built on these strips on the north side of the road. The other four sections were likewise divided into similar strips, and each owner of a house was given an allotment in each section. Thus good and bad land, if there was any difference, was equally distributed.

The first houses, of course, were temporary makeshifts. But in the course of a few years, these were replaced by more substantial buildings. Noble Prentis, the Newton editor, who visited the village in the fall of 1875, says:

The houses of Gnadenau present every variety of architecture, but each house is determined on one thing, to keep on the north side of the street and face the south. Some of the houses are shaped like a wedge tent, the inclining sides consisting of a frame of wood, thatched with long prairie grass, the ends being sometimes of sod, or of boards, and others of sun dried brick. Other houses resemble a small box car, the sides being of sod blocks laid up as a mason lays brick, and the roof of grass. Some of these sod houses were in the course of construction. Finally came substantial frame houses. At the east end of the street in a red frame house, with board window shutters painted green, lives Jacob Wiebe, the head man of Gnadenau. We found Mr. Wiebe a tall powerful man with a more martial appearance than his brethren. Mr. Wiebe has built a house on the Russian model. He took us over the structure, a maze of small rooms and passages, the stable being under the same roof as the people and the granaries over all, the great wheat stacks being located at the back door.

This village of some thirty families strung along the north side of a street a mile long, also became a self sufficient economic and political unit for local purposes, as well as a church congregation and a school district. In a few years, a mill, several stores, a blacksmith shop, and a shoemaker's establishment, as well as a church building and schoolhouse were erected. Following the cus-

tom in Russia, a committee of three men was selected to look after the temporal affairs of the community.

The first years on the prairie were not without their trials and hardships for these colonists, who used up nearly all their financial resources in paying for their transportation to America. The details are perhaps best summarized in a short account given by Elder Wiebe himself some years later:

We were all poor, a number even owing for their passage money, as well as for their oxen, plows, wagons and everything. Some even owed for their sod houses, and all had to buy living provisions for a year. Many went into debt for all this, for there was no way of earning anything. We needed to borrow large sums of money, but where, was the question. We had no friends except B. Warkentin from whom we received \$1,000.00 through the kind efforts of Christian Krehbiel. When this was distributed among those who needed it most, our people again came to me and said we must also have money for oxen and cows. And then Consul Jansen loaned us \$1,000.00. When this was distributed they said now we must have provisions and lumber for our houses. For this Elder Ewert advanced us another \$1,000.00. Then came the time for the first payment on our land, for which Jacob Funk loaned us \$1,000.00.

And so we sat in our sod houses, some two feet in the ground, the walls of sod, the roof thatched with prairie grass that reached to the ground. And we were glad that we were so well fixed for the winter. But we did not realize our danger, for we lived up to our knees in the midst of prairie grass. There were some twentyfive families of us living on one section, all in a row like a village. A good friend near by informed us of the danger we were in; for he had seen prairie fires in the West. He took his five pair of oxen and plowed five or six furrows around the village. Then he told us to burn the grass between the furrows, which we did. Sometimes we had good crops and could meet our payments. Other times such as the grasshopper year of 1877, there was a complete failure and we could not pay our debts. But the company was patient, and finally we had it all paid and the land was ours. But unfortunately, some of them mortgaged their land so heavily that they lost it all.

The large groups that came in the early part of September from Alexanderwohl and other Molotschna villages, and from Volhynia on the *Cimbria*, *Teutonia*, and *City of Richmond* were quartered temporarily as we saw in the Sante Fe shops at Topeka. Here their strange customs, queer clothes and foreign language aroused considerable curiosity and interest among the citizens of Topeka, which at that time, although the capital of the state, yet was hardly more than a frontier village. From the *Topeka Commonwealth* of September 10th, we read:

Large crowds of visitors flocked to the King Bridge shops yesterday to see the 600 Mennonites who arrived there on Thursday. . . . They were dressed in their primitive homespun garments which were usually of coarse wool, and of the most primitive style. Our crack tailors would have been puzzled at the choice appearance of those ancient dresses. The women and children, the young ones, were all consuming huge pieces of bread with a rapidity which augured well for their digestion. They had funny old handkerchiefs tied around their heads, and certainly no Broadway milliner ever supplied one of the quaint bonnets which the fair Mennonite beauties wore. They had all brought huge tin pans, crockery, etc., with them, and their outfit included in almost every case baskets groaning under loads of bread, cheese, sausage.

Speaking elsewhere of the appearance of the men, the same paper continues:

The men appear to have conscientious scruples against wearing clothes that fit them, the idea appearing to be to get all the cloth you can for the money. The men's vests therefore descend toward the knees, and their pants possess an alarming amount of slack. Their favorite head-gear is a flat cloth cap which they pull off in saluting any person. This habit they will soon drop now that they have arrived in Kansas where "nobody respects nothing."

During the month, hundreds of other Mennonites continued to pass through or encamp temporarily for several weeks at Topeka; and as they did so and spent their money freely for farm utensils and household necessities for their western homes, the

Topeka papers soon changed their attitude of idle curiosity to one of keen admiration. The dull times caused by the panic and the grasshoppers made the coming of this large influx of Mennonites, seemingly with plenty of money, at this particular time doubly welcome. On September 25, the *Commonwealth* says:

These people are making extensive purchases from our neighbors, creating quite a demand for articles necessary to opening homes. This is creating quite a trade which, considering the dull times, is very acceptable to our merchants. These people will be large buyers for some time to come, and the acquaintances formed by their temporary location here will give our merchants a strong hold on their trade which it only needs their exercise to retain.

It was for the purpose, no doubt, of cultivating this good feeling that the merchants and public officials of Topeka planned a public reception, and a procession through the city in which all the citizens were urged to join. The reason for this public recognition of the presence of the Mennonites in Topeka, according to the promoters of the plan, was to show "our friends from Russia that we recognize and appreciate their presence among us and are anxious to cultivate neighborly relations with them."

During all this time, the leaders of the different groups were busily engaged in a search for suitable homes along the western frontier between Marion Center and Newton on the east and Hutchinson and Great Bend on the west. The Santa Fe still had thousands of acres of land here which it offered to the Mennonites in large quantities at half price, from \$2.50 to \$5.00 per acre. On alternate sections any quantity of partly improved land could be purchased from original homesteaders who were willing to move farther west for a few dollars profit. These land purchases throughout central Kansas were usually carefully made after a thorough investigation, which is shown by the fact that today the Mennonites are located in the very heart of the best agricultural lands of central Kansas. The diary of David Ediger, one of the men selected by the Alexanderwohl group to investigate suitable locations for settlement, shows us a little of the task involved, and

may not be without interest here. The following random notes are taken from this diary¹:

September 9, 1874.—I was one of ten men selected to look up a suitable location. We left at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Arrived at Emporia at 8:00 o'clock. Remained in Florence all night.

September 10.—Remained all night at Florence with five Polish families. Left in the morning and arrived at Jacob Funk's at 10:00 o'clock. Stopped here for dinner. The land here is quite hilly. Left at 1:00 o'clock. Balzer and Gaeddert from "Marienzendre" left for "Pibude." The rest of us left at 2:00 o'clock from Peter Funk's and arrived at elder William Ewert's. His farm did not suit me, but Funk and Ewert have good land. Stayed all night in Ewert's stable. His house is not yet completed. When finished, it will be 28 by 16 and will cost \$250.00.

September 11.—Friday. Stayed with Ewert until noon, waiting for Balzer and Gaeddert. Left half past one to investigate some land. Out until late at night. Did not meet a single farmer, nor a single person, nor even a single bird until about dark when we met a Mennonite farmer by the name of Holdeman, who received us very kindly and with whom we remained all night. Began to rain.

September 12.—Rained all night and morning. We wished to leave soon after breakfast. Ewert and Stuckey from Poland with us. Haven't met with any good land yet. Too hilly. Left Holdeman at quarter past nine, and arrived at "Nuden" at 4:00. We had dinner at 40 cents each. Left 11:00 o'clock by rail. Very rainy.

September 13.—Arrived at Elmwood at half past three in the morning. A small town with few houses. Had breakfast at the hotel, at 30 cents each. Rained from noon till evening. Had dinner at the home of our driver. In the evening the hotel keeper played and sang.

September 14.—In the depot all night. Did not sleep very well. It rained hard, but cleared up toward noon. Balzer, Wedel and Richert went to Elmwood to look at some land. I went to Great Bend, 10 miles beyond Elm-

¹This diary was secured through the kindness of Professor C. C. Jan-
sen, of the University of Maine.

wood. Dinner at 30 cents. Arrived at Great Bend at 10:00 o'clock. Ohm Stuckey went with a farmer to the other side of the town to see some land.

September 15.—In Great Bend all night. Slept among bed bugs. For seven men and two meals we paid \$2.00 and it was very ordinary. Crossed to the south side of the Arkansas to look at some land but did not like it. It was too hilly and sandy, and the grass is short and too much weeds. Soil is poor. Came back to Great Bend at 2:00 o'clock, and decided not to buy any land.

September 16.—Returned from Great Bend to Hutchinson. Met Balzer and the others here. Stayed at the hotel. Balzer said he had found good land at Hutchinson. We again divided. I, Balzer, Penner, Schultz and another man went south of Hutchinson, the rest went north. We reached Halstead at 5:00 o'clock, and found nice even land. Remained all night at Halstead, then to Newton by train and with the rest to Peabody and Florence.

September 17.—We arrived at Emporia at 7:00 and at Topeka in the afternoon where I met my family but found my wife not very well. In the afternoon we held a council about finding a location. I, Heinrich Rediger, Jacob Siemens, Abraham Neufeld and Heinrich Wahl separated from the others to make a separate settlement.

September 18.—We five left Topeka for Emporia at 9:00 o'clock. The fare was \$3.50. It was a slow train and we arrived at Emporia at 5:00 o'clock. It was rainy and stormy. From Emporia we went to Council Grove. Here we drove out to Jacob Rempel and stayed all night.

September 19.—Left Council Grove. Stopped at noon at Joseph Rempels, and took dinner with Abraham Enns. Well pleased with the land, but afraid of water. Rempel dug a well 63 feet but struck no water.

September 22.—Came to Nickels and Ewerts. Heinrich Ediger and Heinrich Wahl left us and joined the other party. The land did not suit us. Returned and stayed all night at Marion Center.

September 23.—Left Marion Center. Land agents took us around. Siemens did not wish to buy land here.

September 25.—Left Council Grove for Neosho Falls. Free passage. Arrived at Neosho Falls at 10:00 o'clock in the morning. Awaited a telegram from both companies on account of a section which did not belong to the rail-

road. Had heard cut by a black man. A farmer brought in a wild "weinreberwuerzel" which measured 30 feet in length. Jacob telegraphed from Topeka not to buy land until arrival at Topeka. Returned to family at Topeka.

September 26.—Early morning telegraphed David at Rempels to return to Topeka. My family did not wish to go to Rempels. Abraham Neufeld especially did not wish to go at all. Went to market at Topeka and bought a cow for \$14.00.

September 27. Sunday.—Ohm Peter Balzer held services. In the afternoon went pleasure walking about the town.

September 28.—Stayed at home to attend market. Many cattle, horses and wagons were bought. I bought a team, with harness and a wagon for \$225.00. David Ediger returned from Rempels. Bought a number of things preparatory to leaving.

September 29.—Bought another cow for \$14.00. Loaded our things on the car, horses, wagon and cows. Left for Hutchinson at 2:00 o'clock. Arrived at 3:00 o'clock at night. Remained in the car until morning.

September 30.—Early morning quartered in the town. \$5.00 for the night for the family. Unloaded cattle and other things. No damage.

September 31.—Looked for land. Stayed with a farmer all night.

October 1.—Looked at land again with Gaeddert, but found nothing satisfactory.

October 2.—Back to Hutchinson. Selected land in McPherson county, Sec. 33, Range 4, Tp. 21. The others bought also.

October 6.—Loaded up for "Heimreise." Paid Gaeddert \$200.00 for 2 yoke of oxen, 300 lb of wheat; 200 lb of Rye flour; and 15 bushels of potatoes. Started for home.

October 15.—Entered our winter home.

December 12.—Sowed Russian Rye.

January 7, 1875.—At McPherson to pay tax on land. \$8.66 for 320 acres.

May 24.—Went to the Immigrant House to underwrite security for money borrowed by the poor from the Pennsylvania Mennonites.

August 17.—Went to Topeka to meet the children.

Stayed there until Friday at 3:00 o'clock. Children came at 3:00 o'clock. Agatha died on the sixth day of the sea voyage. Left 10:00 at night. Arrived at Burrton on Saturday. Jacob here with team to meet us. Arrived at home on Sunday.

The other landseekers were as deliberate as Ediger in their choice of a permanent home; and it was well into the middle of October before their decisions were made. After all had agreed upon a location, they entered into a contract with the railroad company for several large compact land areas. The *Topeka Commonwealth* for October 15, 1874, reports:

One of the largest bonafide land sales ever made in Kansas, perhaps in America, has just been concluded by the Santa Fe Railroad Company with the community of Russian Mennonites who landed in New York in September on the steamers Cimbria, Teutonia and City of Richmond; and most of whom spent the last 30 days here, and many spent their rubles. The land purchases amount to about 100,000 acres, besides improved farms, about one and one-half millions of capital and about 2,000 souls.

By this time many of the settlers had already left their temporary quarters in the King Bridge shops, and had located upon the lands they had chosen. On October 8th, the *Commonwealth* has this item:

The Mennonites leave today for their homes in the Arkansas valley. There are eighty families here now, and it will take about 15 passenger coaches to convey them. They also have sufficient stock to load 30 freight cars and their household goods and agricultural implements will require 12 freight cars in addition.

As indicated above, this region along the Sante Fe from Newton and Marion Center to Great Bend was still virgin prairie for the most part at this time. The last buffalo in Harvey county had been killed just a short time before. Newton, which for some years had marked the northern end of the Texas cattle trail, had just graduated from being the toughest cow town on the frontier, nine men having been killed in saloon brawls as late as the year

1871. In all directions every alternate section of land was owned by the Sante Fe Railroad Company, hardly an acre of which had been touched by the plow. The government land, most of it, had been homesteaded, but as we have just seen, the panic and grasshoppers had reduced many of the shiftless eastern homesteaders to beggary, who were willing to sell out at any price.

Being already late in the fall, it was necessary to act quickly if these hundreds of Mennonites were to find shelter upon the open prairie before the winter snows set in. The Sante Fe Company erected six large immigrant sheds at three different centers for the temporary shelter of the settlers while they were putting up their own rude sod or frame houses. Suddenly the open prairie between the Cottonwood and the Little Arkansas became alive with human activity where a short time before there was nothing but an uninhabited waste. According to the Topeka papers, long lines of wagons with lumber, household goods and farm implements were passing every day in late October and November from the railway stations bound for the open prairie. Carpenters were busy putting up the first temporary shelters. The prospective settlers were everywhere busy getting ready to dig in for the winter, and provide a winter's food supply for themselves and their stock. The mowers that had been laid by for the season were brought into requisition again to cut the tall prairie grass for the thousands of work oxen and horses, and milk cows during the winter season. Car load after car load of breaking plows and other implements were sent down the road from Topeka, and it seemed the working season for the farmer had just begun. The wild prairie was broken doubly deep in October to secure a dressing of wheat and rye. "No one thinks of grasshoppers and drouth now," says one of these papers, "everybody is happy and energetic, and hope and energy will find their reward."

Among the three groups into which this body of Mennonites was divided, the congregation under the leadership of Elder Jacob Buller, and known as **Alexanderwohl** was the largest. This colony as we saw in the preceding chapter, had first gone to Lincoln, Nebraska, but finally decided upon Kansas as their future

home; and had thus been in Topeka only a short time before this settlement upon the land of their choice north of Newton in Marion and McPherson counties. It formed a closely organized congregation, and in addition to Elder Buller, recognized several other men as leaders, including Heinrich Richert, a long time school teacher and minister, and Peter Balzer, also a teacher. The congregation was one of the more prosperous ones, and did not need assistance as did some of the others. Sixty-five families contracted with a lumber dealer in Halstead to erect that number of dwelling houses on their farms before winter. This contractor engaged a carpenter, D. C. Ruth, from Summerfield, Illinois, who, with the assistance of about 130 other carpenters, succeeded by the middle of December, in finishing these houses in time for occupancy before the heavy snows of winter fell. Such as could not move out upon their own farms remained in the immigrant sheds until the next spring. These houses, all built after the same pattern, were small, one story buildings 20 by 40 feet in size, and erected at a cost of several hundred dollars. Some few are still standing and serving their original purpose.

The Alexanderwohlers, being one of the more conservative groups among the immigrants, tried at first to reconstruct their economic and social life as much as possible upon the Russian model. They, too, at first tried village life. Their houses were built close together, and farms divided into long narrow strips a half mile or full mile long. There were nine village groups each of which was given a characteristic name either brought from Russia or found here. Rosenort, Gnadenfeld, Gnadenenthal, Blumenfeld, Gruenfeld, and several others were all familiar Molotschna names; Hochfeld and Weidefeld were undoubtedly named after local geographic features; Emmathal was located along a creek by that name; Springfield seemingly was the only characteristic American name. This style of settlement had its advantages on the open prairie where farms were large and houses few; but it was soon found that the American custom of placing the farm house in the midst of the farm itself had superior advantages; and so in course of a few years, these villages were broken

up. Some of the names still linger on, however, in the communities where the old so-called villages once existed ².

As a congregation, Alexanderwohl has had an interesting history. From the old church book which was brought from Russia, and seemingly even from Prussia, we gather a few facts about the practices that were prevalent while the congregation was still in Prussia. According to the records the congregation belonged to the branch of the church known as the Old Flemish, or Groningen, one of the strictest and most conservative of the wings of the denomination. Both names come from Holland. The Dutch language was still in use in Prussia as late as 1785, and the records go back as far as 1661 to the organizer of the church in Holland. In 1820, the congregation left Prussia, in the Culm district, and under their Elder, Peter Wedel, settled in the Molotschna district. On the way to Russia, tradition says, they met the Czar who wished them well in their new home, from which circumstance they took the name Alexanderwohl. Among the conservative practices which have survived from the Old Flemish days, is that of footwashing which has now become optional. Their language, the Low Dutch, they brought from Prussia; their style of church architecture they inherited from Holland. In the interior of the church building still in use, the high pulpit along the middle wall, flanked on both sides by an elevated bench for the ministers and deacons, the rail for *Vorsingers*, the galleries all about the room—in fact the whole church structure is almost the exact duplicate of the Mennonite meeting houses in Amsterdam and elsewhere in Holland.

The membership of the congregation at the time of their settlement upon the Kansas prairies numbered about three hundred. This had grown by natural increase by 1880 to nearly four hundred, and by 1900 to nearly eight hundred. Some time later, the membership reached its highest point, nine hundred; and in spite of a number of daughter congregations that have since been formed in Oklahoma, as well as within the precincts of the orig-

²Some of these clusters of houses still exist. Where the houses have disappeared the names survive as names of school districts, sometimes.

inal settlement, and individuals who have continually left their homes, the membership in 1920 was still eight hundred eighty-three, embracing a total population of nearly two thousand, the second largest Mennonite congregation in America.

Not all of the old Alexanderwohl congregation joined the new Alexanderwohl group which we have just been discussing. A part of the company, together with a number of stray colonists from many other Molotschna villages, most of whom came on the *Teutonia* and under the leadership of Dietrich Gaeddert, chose to form a separate colony and organization about twenty miles west of the Alexanderwohl settlement in the adjoining corners of Reno, McPherson and Harvey counties. This group, purchasing about 35,000 acres of railroad land and some homesteads, arrived at Hutchinson from Topeka on October 1st. Unlike the Alexanderwohlers, they did not attempt the village type of settlement; each located immediately upon his own farm, although some divided their farms into long narrow strips, and built their houses close together according to the Russian custom. Some times a family group built their houses on adjoining corners of their farms, giving rise to a special name for the small group as, for example, Franzthal, so named after the village from which the family came in Russia. The church organization which was immediately effected through Gaeddert was called **Hoffnungsausau**. Worship was carried on for a number of years in the immigrant house which the Sante Fe had erected for them. Halstead was for some years the nearest market. But finally the town of Buhler in the heart of the settlement was founded. The membership of Hoffnungsau in 1920 was three hundred fifty-seven.

Almost simultaneously, the Swiss Volhynians under Elder Jacob Stuckey chose the fertile lands along Turkey creek between the two groups above mentioned, in McPherson county. This was mostly railroad land; but some were able to buy improved farms from the discouraged homesteaders. The railroad company erected the usual immigrant houses near the present church house Hoffnungsau. There were a number of poor among this group, and these remained in the East until such time as they could earn

sufficient money to pay their way to the land of their destination. The church organization which was soon formed assumed the name **Hoffnungsfeld**, field of hope, a new name not imported from Russia. None of this group settled in villages. Being of original Amish stock in Europe, and at one time affiliated with the so-called Galicians before their emigration to Russia in the late eighteenth century, these Volhynians were quite conservative in their religious and social practices. Hooks and eyes had been discarded, however, before they came to Kansas and Dakota. Although of Swiss origin, their language was of the South German dialect common in Suabia and the Palatinate. Originally poor, through industry they became in the course of time quite well-to-do, and many rather wealthy. The original congregation has furnished a small number of colonists for other Mennonite congregations in Oklahoma, and elsewhere. Their Swiss origin is betrayed by such common family names as Kaufman, Schrag, Stuckey, Flickinger, Krehbiel, Gering.

The most poverty stricken of all the Russian groups that came to America during the entire emigration period was the Unruh colony from Poland, which arrived at New York in mid-winter, and was immediately rushed to Kansas where it was unloaded at the villages of Florence, Newton, and Great Bend, without provisions or proper clothing on a day that registered twelve degrees below zero. The unexpected arrival of these propertyless Poles created an emergency which required immediate action on the part of the Mennonite Board of Guardians. At a special meeting of this board held at Summerfield on January 2, 1875, it was reported that about five hundred persons had been housed in thirteen buildings at Florence, which were poorly constructed, and ill adapted to keeping out the cold. Eleven were sick at the time, and many had swollen hands and feet as a result of the exposure to which they had been submitted. Nineteen stoves had been purchased, and provisions had been made to supply their most pressing needs. A separate relief organization was perfected to make these people its special charge.

This committee in a meeting in March at Elkhart, seriously



A Pioneer Prairie Home



The Home of Peter Funk, Built 1874

considered sending them back East among the Mennonites where they might earn enough money to get a start in the West. Further deliberation convinced them, however, that this would not be practicable, and instead they decided to raise sufficient money to help them to small farms where they might become self-supporting. In the course of the spring and summer of 1875 with the help of the Sante Fe, the committee finally succeeded in locating most of these helpless Poles on small 40-acre farms, near the village of Canton where it was hoped they might at least become self-supporting. But they required continual assistance through the year. D. S. Holdeman, of the local committee whom we have already quoted, reports that during the year his organization spent \$10,000 on them. The whole group had been placed on seven sections of land divided up into small farms. In farm equipment they were poorly supplied. All told, the entire group had only ten wagons, seventeen breaking plows; often one yoke of oxen had to be shared by two or more families. At first the committee furnished one cow for two families, but later sometimes one of the families was able to buy out the other and thus came into possession of a whole cow. But poor equipment was not their only handicap. They were not only poor in this world's goods; they seemingly also lacked moral integrity. The fact that unlike the other groups they lacked the initiative of even giving their settlement a name is evidence of their spiritual demoralization. The name by which they were known was left to chance. Because many of them came from near Ostrog, in Volhynia they were sometimes called **Ostrogers**; but because they lived near Canton, they became known quite generally as the **Cantoners**.

Their extreme poverty even as late as the end of the first year is well pictured in a letter written in October, 1875, by J. F. Funk, who visited them at that time, and tells of his visit to Amos Herr of Pennsylvania. In describing their condition at this time, Funk says that they occupy eight sections, and live on forty-acre farms. Ten are widows, and all of them poor. They have neither chairs, bedsteads, nor floors. They are without stoves and have no fuel; and insufficiently dressed. Continuing, he reports:

We visited there October 29th. It was a cold, cloudy, dreary day, and it was very windy; I can tell you it was a hard sight to see them, even the women and children walking about in their low slippers without stockings, and the children with hands and faces purple on account of the cold blasts. Many of the children were lying or sitting on their beds or pallets made of a straw sack laid on the floorless earth in the huts, and covered themselves with featherbeds to keep comfortable as there was neither stove nor fire. The greater portion of them have stoves, but some have only a sort of earthen oven of clay out of doors where they cook and bake.

They seem to be very scant in clothing. Boots, shoes and stockings would be very acceptable.

We stopped at one house in which there lived six families, including two widows. One family sat in a corner just eating their breakfast which consisted of a dish of potato soup cooked with dry prairie grass, corn stalks, and weeds and roots gathered on the prairie. This family of families had a stove outside of their house in a little enclosure made of blocks of sod walled up. The house itself was about 16 by 20 feet as near as we could judge. made of rough boards. The roof was of the same material, and the boards on the side not having been seasoned, dried and shrank considerably after having been nailed on, so that there were large openings between, through which the wind blew strong and fierce. Our hearts bled for the poor women and children who would have to spend the stormy days of the coming winter in these open shells.

For some years these Cantoners tried the patience of both the relief committees and the Western District Conference. They seemingly were incapable of either financial or spiritual prosperity. Those responsible for their welfare tried various relief expedients. At one time many of the young men and women were sent East among the Mennonites of Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the hope that the money earned might be sent West to help the older members of the family to self-support. But the young people were a disappointment. They either spent their earnings on themselves, or as soon as they had earned enough to pay their passage back, they returned. Work was then found

for many of the able bodied in the broom corn fields among the Swedes to the north. But the loss to their own crops from neglect was not made up by the extra wages earned in the broom corn fields. Evidently they were no farmers. In Russia they had been small dairymen, linen weavers and day laborers. The committee had about come to the conclusion that they were hopeless as Kansas farmers.

At the same time, too, as already indicated, they seemed to lack spiritual and moral stamina. Their elder, Tobias Unruh, at best an unreliable leader, left quite early for Dakota where a small number of his flock had emigrated the first year. No one seemed available to assume spiritual and moral leadership. The Western District Conference finally took the matter in hand, and made an attempt to organize the church life, and select religious leaders and provide schools; for schooling was one of the prime necessities, many of the young people having had practically no schooling in Russia. The congregation being too poor to support either a preacher or school teacher, the Conference provided for outside help. Schools were finally established, but it seemed impossible to secure suitable ministers. Those selected finally refused to serve. In the meantime during this period of demoralization, there was much rumor of moral laxity among the young people. As late as 1879 a committee which had been appointed by the Western District Conference to investigate conditions reported that unless considerable improvement was made, the congregation was not fit for membership in the Conference. In the same year, Editor David Goerz in *Zur Heimath* suggests to Missionary Haury, who had just returned from Alaska without deciding definitely upon that region as a proper missionary field, that he take up the work at Canton, which Goerz says is just as much in need of missionary effort as the heathen in Alaska.

This question was finally solved so far as the Western District Conference was concerned when in the early eighties, John Holdeman, a resident in that region, and founder of the Church of God, appeared among them and in course of time gathered the majority of the entire group into his organization. Some moved

away. Those who remained finally developed into a small but respectable member of the Conference. The statistics of 1920 indicated that the Canton congregation of the Western District Conference had some sixty members.

Not all of Unruh's congregation settled at Canton in 1875. Some went to Dakota and quite a group located at **Pawnee Rock**. The Sante Fe circular of 1878, containing a list of the Mennonite settlements in Kansas at that time, gives the number of families located at this place at thirty-seven. Most of them, being very poor, had settled on homesteads, though some had secured school lands. Among the ministers here at the time, the following are mentioned: H. Siebert, Jacob Koehn, and Tobias Dirks, just recently chosen by the congregation.

Another small colony of Mennonites from Poland, under the leadership of Elder Benjamin Unruh, located along French creek, south of Durham Park in the summer of 1875. The congregation which was formed was given the name of **Johannesthal**.

On the same ship with Tobias Unruh's congregation came another group, principally from Michalin, Poland, and for that reason often spoken of as Michaliner, under the leadership of Elder Johan Schroeder, in all about thirty families. These located upon about 3,500 acres of land in 1875, near what was then called Sheldon, in Harvey county. The church congregation is now called **Gnadenberg**, and in 1920 had a membership of one hundred sixty-five.

About as poor as these various Polanders was a group from the Volga known in all the reports of the time as Peter **Eckerts** church. These were members of what was known as the Mennonite Brethren church, many of whom had been converts from original Lutheran congregations of that region. They introduced rather a new element consequently into the Mennonite population. As we have already seen, Eckert's people came at different times during the summer of 1875, but Peter himself with the larger part of his company, like Unruh, arrived in a most inappropriate time in midwinter of 1875-76. Some forty of the families of Eckert's group located west of Gnadenau, about a dozen for a

time being located on the large farm of Jacob Funk. In the course of the year, many others came from the same general region, along the Volga, and from the Kuban. Another division of about thirty families under Elder A. Hahnhardt located in Rush county where they organized a congregation under the name of **Gnadenthal**.

PRUSSIANS

In the meantime there was also a small emigration of Prussian Mennonites during this period, almost all from the congregation of Heubuden. Germany, too, had inaugurated a system of universal military service in 1870, and although the Cabinet Order of 1868 issued by the North German Confederation, which permitted the Mennonites to substitute noncombatant service, was respected in the new Imperial constitution, there were still a number of Mennonites, principally from the congregation above mentioned, who objected to any service under the military authorities as contrary to their religious principles. It was this group that William Ewert represented as a deputy in 1873. Ewert himself and two other Prussians, as we have already seen, had emigrated in 1874 and located at Bruderthal. In 1876, some twenty families came on the steamer *Rhine*, and after remaining for a short time at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, directed there no doubt by Cornelius Jansen, they separated, and about half of them, including their elder, located near Beatrice, Nebraska, while the other half came to Kansas. In the latter state they settled in three small centers.

Goldschar was an imported name given a little group of four families who had built their houses close together on adjoining corners of their four farms south of Newton. Others later also moved into this neighborhood, and in course of time this group joined the congregation at Newton of which Rev. J. Toews of Chiva became the elder.

The other two settlements were made in Butler county, south of Peabody, near Elbing, and Whitewater. Among the settlers here were Leonhard Suderman, the deputy of 1873, and who was elected elder at Whitewater in 1877; his brother Abraham; Peter Dueck, the elder at Elbing; Gerhard Regier, who according to

the Sante Fe circular already mentioned "manufactured Limburger cheese," and Dietrich Klaasen who according to the same authority, "lived in an up-to-date two-story house."

These Prussians were rather well-to-do at the time of their arrival. Peter Jansen, who was in close touch with them, says in his memoirs:

Most of them were well-to-do; some had large fortunes; they were well dressed, and had good manners, quite contrary to the usual class of immigrants then coming to this country by the thousands. I well remember the favorable remarks the railroad officials made when I passed through Chicago with my crowd. I felt quite proud.

In fact, they seemed perhaps a little too well dressed for their western environment. They evidently were gentlemen farmers in Prussia, and expected to play the same role on the bare plains of Kansas. Among the various farm conveniences they brought with them from Prussia were several two-seated carriages such as were used by the aristocracy of Europe at that time—the two seats facing each other and a high box in front for the driver. Continuing their European customs, these country gentlemen drove about here at first in their aristocratic carriages. But in course of time, the vision of such an outfit drawn by a team of bob tailed horses driven by a coachman perched high on the driver's seat, perhaps with a tall hat on his head, coming into the frontier villages over the dusty, winding prairie trails was too much for the risibilities of the native "Yankees." The Prussians themselves soon saw the humorous side of this means of travel, and finally abandoned their fine carriages for vehicles more in keeping with their frontier surroundings. But like the wonderful one horse shay, these carriages were well made of tough wood, strongly buttressed with heavy iron braces; and they succumbed to time very slowly in spite of the fact that they were left out under the open sky a great deal to hasten the process of decay. To this day, one can still occasionally find on a few farms south of Peabody, an old dilapidated running gear reposing in the sun back of the machine shed, or the broken piece of a seat in some

out of the way fence corner, mute reminders to the older generation of a glory long since departed. With the passing of this stylish means of locomotion also passed many of the aristocratic notions of gentleman farming on the Kansas prairies, but not until the farmers themselves had missed many opportunities of adding to their store of this world's goods which their less wealthy but more thrifty Russian brethren to the north used to better advantage.

By 1877, there were twenty-four Prussian families in Butler county. In the years immediately following others came. In 1884, five families of the ill-fated Chiva expedition joined them; and in the early eighties a group of Swiss directly from the fatherland settled among them near Whitewater. In 1926, the **Emmaus** congregation at Whitewater had a membership of 197; and the **Zion** congregation at Elbing, 34; while the **Swiss** group near by numbered 72.

GALICIANS

Mention should be made here also of twenty-two families from Galicia who settled in this state in the late eighties. Although in no way connected with the Russian migration, yet they located among them here, and affiliated with them in the Western District Conference; and no story of Mennonite immigration to Kansas would be complete without a reference to them. They are Galicians by adoption only, of course. Racially they are South Germans, having migrated to Galicia from the Palatinate, Alsace, and Switzerland shortly after Emperor Joseph of Austria had taken that province from Poland after the first partition. They were attracted here by liberal terms of settlement including military exemption which the Emperor offered them; and remained here, except such as had departed for Russia before the close of the eighteenth century, until they came to America. About seventy-five families migrated to America in the late eighties, fifty-three of whom located near Butterfield, Minnesota; and twenty-two in small congregations in Kansas, one near **Arlington** in Reno county, and the other near **Hanston** in Hodgman county. Their dialect betrays their South German ancestry, being quite

similar to that of the Swiss Volhynians, as well as the Halstead Palatines. In fact, as indicated elsewhere, the two groups, Galicians and Volhynians, formed a single group in Galicia before 1790 when a small contingent of them migrated to Russia. The names Rupp, Ewy, and Mueller is evidence also of their common ancestry, originally Swiss for the most part. Linscheid, Voran and a few other families affiliated with the group some time after they left their South German and Swiss ancestral homes.

HALSTEAD

No history of the Russian migration to Kansas would be complete without some reference to the settlement at Halstead. Although few of the settlers here were from Russia, yet the leaders of the congregation took such a leading part in the whole Russian immigration movement that they must be included in any history of that event.

The congregation at Halstead is composed almost exclusively of former members of the church at Summerfield, Illinois, who in turn had migrated to that place in the forties and fifties from the Palatinate, either directly or by way of southeastern Iowa. The Summerfield congregation, and especially its elder, Christian Krehbiel, took a keen interest in everything that pertained to the immigration from Russia from the very start. We have already seen that this congregation was made one of the chief centers visited by both the committee of young men in 1872, and the Committee of Twelve of 1873. The Summerfielders themselves had been interested in finding cheaper land for their surplus population for some years past and so when the Russian movement began, they became greatly interested in it. Christian Krehbiel and other members of the congregation accompanied a number of the Russian delegates in 1873, as well as some of their first immigrants on land seeking tours through the West and Southwest, especially Texas and Kansas. He also headed some of the Summerfielders on similar expeditions. In January, 1874, about twenty-five members of the Summerfield congregation made a trip to Kansas to purchase 18,000 acres of railroad land north of

Halstead. The price paid varied from \$1.75 to \$3.00 per acre, according to the distance from the railroad, which was little more than half the regular price the Sante Fe usually asked for similar land.

During the year a number of these purchasers moved on to their farms. The next year others came, and for several years following still others, until a flourishing settlement and church congregation was established. In course of a short time, those living in the extreme northern end of the settlement, finding it inconvenient to attend church at Halstead, formed a new congregation with a church building near what is now Mound Ridge, which they called **Christian**, after a small village by that name so called because it was located near the corner of three adjoining farms, the owners of which were all called Christian. Valentine Krehbiel became the first elder. Later a number of the Swiss Vohlynians also joined this congregation.

The Halstead church became one of the most progressive congregations in the entire Western District Conference, and the American headquarters for some years of the whole emigration movement. Both of the Russians at Summerfield, Warkentin and Goerz, followed the colonists to their new home. Warkentin built the first flour mill in Harvey county, and started an industry that later became famous throughout the West. Goerz, as we have seen, became one of the leaders of everything that concerned his Russian friends, and a pioneer in their educational work. In Halstead, he established in 1875 the *Zur Heimath*, a weekly, published in the interests of the Russians both in America and Russia. This paper with its news from the various western states and Canada as well as Europe and Asia seemed quite cosmopolitan in its outlook, and not at all like the ordinary little country weekly printed in a village of 200. In its advertising pages it carried more notices of ship and railroad companies with dates of sailing and price of passage than the great New York dailies.

Finally, Halstead became the seat of Halstead Seminary, the first institution of higher learning among the Russian Mennonites, and the forerunner of Bethel College.

VIII.

ESTABLISHING FRONTIER HOMES

DAKOTA

Reference has already been made in a preceding chapter to the fact that the original choice of the region about Fargo, which several of the delegates had selected as the possible site of a settlement, had been passed by in favor of another location largely because favorable Congressional action could not be secured for land reservation. Instead, the first settlement in Dakota was made in the southeastern part of the territory, a region seemingly not considered at all by the delegates of 1873. Most of the settlers here, with the exception of the founder of the colony, were of the poorer classes, and for that reason chose homesteads directly from the Government or bought the rights of original homesteaders. The region settled lay within the James river valley in what are now Turner and Hutchinson counties. Later on there were a few scattered settlements in surrounding counties.

This region at this time was still a virgin prairie, with Yankton, the territorial capital and the nearest market and railway station from thirty to fifty miles away. To reach this market with an ox team, it took a full two days' journey. At Swan Lake near by, there was a little settlement with a store or two and a post-office on the stage line which ran from Sioux Falls to Yankton.

The pioneer in this Mennonite settlement was a certain Daniel Unruh, one of the Crimean group that had arrived in the summer of 1873, most of whom had located in Kansas and Minnesota. Unruh spent several months investigating available lands in several states before finally selecting the homestead lands of southeastern Dakota. He located with four or five other families, mostly his married sons and daughters, about thirty miles north of Yankton, near what is now Menno in Hutchinson county.

Since it was late in the fall, these first settlers remained in Yankton for the winter; but moved on to the open prairie early in the spring when they began immediately to erect their houses and break prairie for their spring seeding.

On May 27th of this same spring, Andreas Schrag, the deputy of the Volhynian group the year before, and ten other families arrived at Yankton, the vanguard of the large Swiss settlement which followed during the summer. Schrag, who had been one of the deputies that was favorably impressed at first with the region about Fargo, changed his mind upon meeting Unruh in the fall of 1873, and decided to follow Unruh, who was a man of some wealth and good judgment, to the Yankton settlement.

This was the beginning of the large Swiss-Russian community in Dakota. When the main body of the Swiss came over in the late summer, Ewert, who in the meantime had settled in Kansas, met them as they landed in New York in September, and induced about half of them to follow him to the Sunflower state; but fifty-three families decided to follow their deputy to Dakota. These scattered about north and east of where Unruh and Schrag had located, either on homesteads, or slightly improved farms at the head of Turkey creek. Since it was already late in the fall, they lost no time in digging in for the winter. A few with money built fairly comfortable frame houses; several had bought improved farms including dwelling quarters; most of them hastily set up sod houses partly buried in the earth. While still engaged at this task of preparing shelter against the winter snows, they experienced their first prairie fire which, although it did not claim any human victims, yet it did destroy a number of the partly completed homes with all their contents. The first winter was a bitter experience. Fuel was scarce; the rudely constructed sod huts were ill-fitted to keep out the chilly winds that blew across the open prairies; often the only way to keep warm was to remain in bed. Fierce blizzards piled the snows high across the rude prairie trails making access to the market place many miles away an impossibility. Supplies in many places became exhausted, and some

families were compelled to live on corn bread and water ¹. When spring finally came, the settlement found itself so poor that eastern relief organizations had to come to their assistance with flour and other provisions, as well as money with which to buy farm equipment and seed. For several years, grasshopper plagues and other catastrophies followed one another until it almost seemed that the new settlement was doomed. But patience and industry finally overcame all hardships. In course of time, the settlements developed into a number of the most prosperous congregations in the entire West. Among the most common names among these Swiss were Graber, Schrag, Kauffman, Goering, Albrecht, with a few each of Preheim, Ries, Flickner, Stucky, Miller, Swartz and Waldner, with one or two exceptions, all of original Bernese descent.

About the same time, too, several other groups had arrived from the same province of Volhynia, though from a different section, and from other regions of old Poland. Most of these were of Tobias Unruh's church, the larger part of which, as we have seen, located near Canton, Kansas. Most of these so-called Poles were from several villages near Ostrog-Michalin, Karoldswald, and Heinrichsdorf; and formed a separate settlement near the Swiss. These came to Dakota in the spring of 1875 directly from Newton, Kansas, where they had spent the winter. Among the common names of this group are to be found Becker, Unruh, Boese, Buller, Schartner, Nickel, and Koehn. Several Ortman families had located here also early in May, 1874. A third settlement, composed largely of immigrants from various Molotschna villages, was made near by. These three groups above mentioned settled in a more or less compact colony across the head of Turkey creek between the James and Vermillion rivers where the present Mennonite towns of Marion, Freeman and Menno are found.

Huterites

Somewhat apart from these were the Huterites, all of whom located in Dakota in separate settlements, and most of them in

¹See John J. Gering, "After Fifty Years."

communities. The first group in 1874 which had been persuaded to take passage to Lincoln, Nebraska, by the agent of the Burlington & Missouri Railroad Company had some difficulty in finding its way to Dakota. According to the *Dakota Herald* in an editorial entitled "Outrage on the Mennonites," August 11, 1874, the Nebraska land sharks after they found it impossible to detain them in Nebraska, tried to hold their baggage in Lincoln in payment for railroad fare from Burlington to Lincoln. It was only upon intervention of Yankton citizens, so says the *Herald*, that their baggage was released and their departure for Dakota made possible. These two hundred fifty people, some thirty-five or forty families, were the founders of the first Bruderhofs at Wolf Creek, and at Bon Homme on the Missouri. Not all of the Huterites formed themselves into communistic Bruderhofs^a. A number of them located on private farms. A third community was established in 1877 by some seventeen families at Elm Spring. The last contingent from Russia came in 1879. These three were the original communities. All the rest, some fourteen, were offshoots of these three.

The Huterites did not take advantage of the Homestead law in securing their lands. The reason no doubt was partly due to the desire to escape the necessity of assuming American citizenship, but largely because the demand for large compact areas to establish their communities could seldom be met by taking up individual homesteads. The *Dakota Herald* for August 25, 1874, contains this news item which is of interest in this connection:

Hon. W. A. Burleigh yesterday sold 2,500 acres of his large farm near Bon Homme, the purchasers being a society of Russian Germans banded together after the manner of communists. They have paid twenty-five thousand dollars; seventeen in cash, and the rest in installments.

From these three Bruderhofs, others were sent out,—Milltown, 1886; Jamesville, 1894; Maxwell, 1900; Tschetter, 1900; Pockport, 1904; and Rosedale, 1906—all near the original three. Between 1900-1915, a number of others were established farther

^a.See Chapter II, note 2.

up the James river valley in Beadle, Spink and Sanborn counties. The colonies were usually established along the banks of some stream, so that the water power could be utilized for milling purposes, milling next to farming being a leading industry among them. The entire number of Huterites in Dakota, Bruderhof and those settled on private farms, was perhaps something like two thousand souls by 1917. During the war because of unusual and uncalled for brutal treatment of them on the part of the local Councils of Defence in the northern counties, twelve of the seventeen Bruderhofs emigrated to Canada, leaving only five of the earlier settlements in the lower James river valley. A 1926 Mennonite ministerial list gives South Dakota only eight out of a total of forty-three ministers, all the rest being in Manitoba and Alberta. The same authority gives the entire membership of the churches in Canada and the Dakotas as nine hundred eighty-two.

The present Huterite population is composed of the natural increase of a very small number of original families who came from South Germany, Moravia and Tyrol several hundred years ago. There have been practically no additions from the outside since that time. The entire present population of two thousand can be grouped under approximately fourteen family names as follows—Tschetter, Hofer, Glanzer, Walter, Mendel, Kleinsasser, Stahl, Decker, Wipf, Wollman, Gross, Pullman, Wurz and Mueller². These are the original simon-pure Huterites, who can trace their origin back to the days of the persecution in Moravia and Tyrol in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; all others are interlopers who have somehow gotten into the fold since that time.

The Huterites are well versed in their early history; and in their archives are preserved the records of all their sufferings and wanderings through Europe from the earliest days to the time of their arrival in Dakota. These records have just recently been edited by Dr. Rudolf Wolkan, a well known historian of the Anabaptists living in Vienna, and published by a Viennese book firm. Their language, both in the pulpit as well as in the home, is still the German, although the new school laws now in Dakota as well

²Upon authority of D. E. Harder.

as elsewhere compel the use of English in the schools, and the younger generation is gradually learning the use of the English tongue, a fact which no doubt will make it increasingly difficult in the future to hold the Bruderhofs together as communistic societies.

As an experiment in communism, these colonies furnish an extremely interesting study in social organization. They are perhaps the oldest existing communistic society in the world, going back to the early sixteenth century. Each unit or colony is called a Bruderhof, and is independent from every other similar unit in its government. From fifteen to twenty families ordinarily make up a unit. The Wolf Creek colony, the oldest and one of the most prosperous of all, consisted in 1924 of twenty-five families, owning about six thousand acres of land. Although independent of each other, yet all were run along similar lines, and differed only in minor details. The following description furnished by a young school teacher of the Elm Spring colony³, a sympathetic outsider, would no doubt apply to all the colonies without the necessity of many alterations.

The houses are usually long, one-story structures, built of heavy stone walls divided up into a series of rooms for living quarters. No family is given more than two rooms for its own use; and some times there are ten or twelve families under the same roof. The furniture is plain and meagre, consisting usually of a table, bed, several chests, and chairs, but no rocking chairs. In the old houses, the ceiling is supported by heavy wooden beams, due to the fact that the attic at that time was used as a storage room for wheat and other grain. The grown children room in separate dormitories. Other buildings—stables, sheds, school and meeting houses, are all built after the same pattern.

Agriculture being the chief occupation, the Bruderhofs are all placed in the open country. But farming is not the only occupation. Being still as much as possible a self-sufficing economic as well as religious and social unit, many medieval customs as well as religious beliefs are still retained. The hum of the spinning

³.Paul Zerbe, of Scotland, South Dakota.

wheel is still a familiar sound on a winter afternoon in many a work room. Much of the clothing of both men and women is home grown; and nearly all of it home made, with the exception perhaps of men's hats and rubber boots. The wool, after it is spun, is usually left its natural color; but when dyed at all it is almost always colored some shade of gray. Shoes and boots are also home made and quite often, though not always, from leather of their own tanneries. Nearly every Bruderhof has a mill. The Wolf Creek mill in an early day furnished good flour far and wide for the pioneers of southeastern Dakota long before there were any other mills in that part of the territory. To this day this mill still grinds much of the flour for the surrounding farmers, exchanging flour for wheat at a price considerably cheaper than it would be secured elsewhere. The Wolf Creek colony also specializes in broom making. The sheep industry has also been given considerable attention in recent years, as well as the raising of pigeons for which they have been getting a fancy price in the eastern markets. The Bonhomme Bruderhof along the Missouri has made fishing an important side line, disposing of their catches in neighboring towns. And so every colony is likely to carry along with its general farming operations some special industry for which it is especially well adapted by location; and to include among its labor force not only farmers and stock raisers but such specialized artisans as blacksmiths, carpenters, broom makers, tanners, shoemakers, harness makers, millers and gardeners.

Everything in the Bruderhof is run on a strictly communistic basis. There is neither private property, nor choice of occupation. Every one has his job assigned him by those in power at the time. Some of the drudgery like milking, cooking, etc. is assigned to groups in shifts of a week each. Other more highly specialized work, such as the work of the miller, tanner and blacksmith may be assigned for life. No one but the Boss has any money. When the men go to town, they may be given a quarter to spend, and the boys a dime, which usually goes for ice cream or candy. Women never leave home unattended, and consequently are not supposed to be in need of spending money.

Sometimes the boys, however, by trapping in winter and by various other means in summer, find a way of making a few extra pennies which do not find their way to the public coffers. The older men, too, especially the shoemaker, harness maker and other specialists sometimes keep a few extra quarters for themselves. This practice is not without its risks, however, for detection by the ministers would result in rather severe disciplinary measures.

Children are taken at two and one-half years of age, and placed under the care of an elderly woman, who for six days in the week teaches them short prayers, nursery rhymes, and religious songs. Each evening, these children are returned to their mothers for the night. At six they are sent to school where they remain under the care of a teacher until fourteen. In the early days before the school laws were as strict as now, the language of the school room was German, and the subject matter largely religion; the teacher, usually some poorly prepared young man of the colony. But now the schools, which are still housed in the meeting houses, must conform to the state requirements as regards both curriculum and language; and the teacher more than likely is some one from outside of the Bruderhof. Their own young men, however, are rapidly qualifying for these teaching positions. At fourteen the child becomes a full fledged member of the economic system, and is assigned a definite place in the general scheme of things. Because of the state requirements now during the regular school year, the summer vacations are utilized for teaching the German and religious subjects. These summer periods are taught, of course, by their own teachers, and sessions are held only in the forenoon except on rainy days when the whole day is devoted to study.

All the members of the community eat at a common dining table, children under fourteen waiting for the second table. The food is likely to be plain, but wholesome and served in generous quantities. All Huterites have good appetites. In dress they are plain and uniform, with a decided tendency toward the perpetuation of old established styles. Some of the cuts of their clothing go back several centuries. Boys are dressed like their fathers;

while the girls look like miniature mothers. Women never appear in public without having their heads covered with a kind of handkerchief of many colors. The rest of their wearing apparel is of some somber color.

In government the colonies are patriarchal and theocratic, the preacher being the dominating personality among them. At the head of the economic organization is the *Wirt* who in more recent times has acquired the more expressive name of "Boss," elected for life. The Boss is the business manager of the colony, in charge of all the buying and selling, as well as the distributing of the necessities of life among the various members of the community. Under him are a number of heads of departments also bearing similar titles. In the Elmspring Bruderhof are found among other "Bosses" the following: Farm Boss, Cow Boss, Hog Boss, Sheep Boss, Chicken Boss and Duck Boss. The teacher under the old system was almost of equal rank with the Boss and the preacher⁴. These three, together with the elders all elected for life by the male church members above twenty-one years of age, form the ruling hierarchy of the community, and sit on the front bench facing the audience in the meeting on Sunday.

Church services are held each Sunday forenoon beginning at 10:00 o'clock and lasting for several hours. Sermons are read from manuscript. Each evening during the week a religious service of half hour's length is held just about at sunset. After this meeting, such business affairs as may need attention are transacted. Only male church members above twenty-one are eligible to take part in these business meetings. Women never have a voice.

Discipline of both adults and children is left largely to the preacher and teacher respectively. Corporal punishment is occasionally meted out by the teacher upon unruly children. For serious violations of the rules, children are sometimes made to kneel in a conspicuous part of the room all during the Sunday service. Church members if guilty of a punishable offense are put on probation, "set back from meeting," until such time as

⁴Where the teacher is an outsider, he does not occupy such an exalted position as does one of their own life teachers.

they are willing to repent, or in extreme cases entirely excommunicated. With excommunication always goes the practice of "avoidance," that is, social and economic as well as religious ostracism from the brotherhood. Usually, this treatment either brings about the desired repentance, or in rare cases, drives the offender completely out of the Bruderhof.

Social life in these Bruderhofs is not on a high plane. Young people may occasionally visit among other communities, but seldom go anywhere else. Their social contacts with the outside world are few; and their knowledge of what is going on there quite limited. The greatest social event of the year is an occasional wedding which originally was the source of a three-day celebration by all the members of the community, but now of only one. Weddings are usually consummated in the church in the fall of the year, after the busy farm work is over; and everybody is invited. Courtship is not tolerated until after the engagement is announced publicly from the pulpit. But young people often find a way of evading these regulations, as young people will; and more often than not, those who know of these evasions do not tell. When a young man wishes to marry, and has decided upon the girl of his choice, he first confers with his father, who then consults the parents of the prospective bride. If the parents are willing and the girl consents, then both sets of parents inform the preacher of the arrangement, who then makes the necessary announcement from the pulpit. Not until then does official courtship begin. There is no wedding journey after the wedding, and likely few wedding presents. The young people immediately take up their residence in their one room house, which has been prepared and furnished for them.; and where for the rest of their days they are freed from all worry of making ends meet, and keeping the wolf away from the door.

Economically, communism has been a decided success among the Huterites. Profits have been large, and expenses low. Surplus profits have been invested in lands for other Bruderhofs to take care of their growing population. The original three, as we saw earlier, have grown to some twenty. But this economic pros-

perity has been gained at too great a price, the loss of all individual initiative, a rather low standard of social responsibility, and gross ignorance of the world about them. As to the future, it is quite evident that long before another four hundred years have passed, this, the oldest existing communist society in the world will have gone into history. Already there are signs, especially among the young people, of dissolution. The elders are complaining that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to satisfy their young people with their lot as their contacts with the outside world become more extensive. It is very problematical whether communism will be able to survive in America against the automobile, radio, rural delivery and compulsory high school attendance.

Had the communism of the Huterites been based merely upon an economic and social theory, it would long ago have gone the way of scores of other similar experiments. But Jacob Huter in the early sixteenth century found Scriptural authority for the sharing of temporal as well as spiritual gifts, thus giving communism a religious sanction, and making it a church doctrine as essential to salvation as any other. In that fact is to be found the reason for the unusual longevity and continued vitality of this social experiment which under other circumstances has so often been doomed to failure.

Summing up the total membership in Dakota of all Mennonites of Russian-German origin, including the Huterites, in 1916, before the dispersion caused by the war, we find that the statistics for that year are as follows: Huterites, 837; Krimmer Brethren, 192; Mennonite Brethren, 40; General Conference, 769; making a total of 1,838 members, which would equal about double that number in total population.

MINNESOTA

About half of the group of Crimean families that arrived at Elkhart in the summer of 1873 located during that same year near Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The land seeking committee that had been sent out from Elkhart, acting upon the suggestion of deputy Ewert, first investigated the region marked by Ewert's buffalo head near Fargo, Dakota. But evidently they were not well in-

pressed with his choice. For, after visiting southeastern Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa, they eventually chose Minnesota. None of these other states satisfied them. Dakota, they said, lacked good water. Kansas was too hot and dry. Neither wheat and barley nor potatoes seemed to do well here. Corn seemed the main crop, and corn, which in South Russia went by the name of "kukurus," was not regarded very highly there as a food product. Iowa, too, raised too much "kukurus." In all these places they said people looked sickly as though the climate might be unhealthy. But Minnesota appealed to all of them. In the words of one who was charmed with the landscape about here, the view across the little village of Mountain Lake was very beautiful. The wooded hill in the middle of the three hundred acre lake gave the place a charming appearance. The many small lakes, the running streams, the rich grass meadows, and the well fed cattle seen there convinced them that this was a desirable country in which to live. Potatoes, wheat and barley all did well. One of their number was especially impressed with the rosy cheeks of the native inhabitants, as compared with the sallow complexion of the people in Kansas, which convinced him that the climate must be exceedingly healthful.

These various charms of southwestern Minnesota induced Rev. David Schroeder, Deacon Heinrich Goertz, *Vorsinger* Carl Gloeckler and Aaron Peters, together with their sons and sons-in-law,—thirteen families in all, to choose the Mountain Lake region as their home, a choice which our informant says they never had occasion to regret. This party of pioneers arrived here too late in the fall to enter immediately upon their farming operations that year; but they were ready to start early the following spring. Most of them purchased their land from the St. Paul & Sioux City Railroad Company at a price from \$4.00 to \$6.00 per acre.

Each year for several years, there were substantial additions to the settlement from Russia. In 1874, however, by far the largest part of the immigration was directed toward Kansas and Dakota, Minnesota receiving only fifteen families for the year. In 1875, it was Minnesota's turn again. Of the large party of nine-

ty-five families which arrived on the Red Star liners *Nederland* and *State of Nevada*, in July and August, about half of the entire group found their way to the Mountain Lake colony. There were a number of additions also the following year, about half of all the immigrants who came to the United States this year choosing Minnesota. Elder Ewert of Kansas, who organized the first Minnesota church in November of this year, is authority for the statement that by this time, there were about two hundred families in the settlement.

Both 1875 and 1876 were years of hardships for those who had located here by this time. Grasshoppers had taken the entire growing crop and there was great distress among the settlers. But for such immigrants as came immediately after this, the plague was in some respects a blessing in disguise, for many of the early native settlers, discouraged by the grasshoppers, often sold their homesteads frequently with improvements, live stock and farm equipment at an extremely low figure, which the Russians eagerly bought up.

The grasshopper pest being quite general through the West during these years, Minnesota did not suffer more than the other states, and so each year a few additions were made to the Russian population, though it never again reached the proportions of 1875. In 1877, a small company of about fifty persons arrived from the Bergthal colony, nearly all of whom had located in Manitoba, by this time. From the *Zur Heimath* of July, 1878, we learn that of the one hundred and six families that had arrived at New York on the steamer *Strasburg*, twenty-five families had gone to Minnesota. The next year which was the last year of the immigration, fourteen of the one hundred twenty-seven families that arrived on the *Switzerland* located at Mountain Lake.

The Minnesota contingent of Russian Mennonites experienced the usual hardships of pioneer settlers. Although they had located near a railroad, yet the region was sparsely settled. The first comers purchased railroad land, but some of the later arrivals bought improved homesteads at prices, as already said, greatly reduced by the grasshopper plague, some homesteads being

bought as low as \$800.00 for 160 acres. The settlers came principally from the Molotschna colony with the exception of the small Bergthal contingent, and some fifty families of Galicians who located near Butterfield in the late eighties. Unlike their Kansas brethren, the Minnesotans did not group themselves into villages. This was due to the fact that many of the farms were individual homesteads with buildings already erected, and land was not bought in large tracts as in the first purchases in Kansas.

While these settlers were not among the poorest of the immigrants, nor as poor as those who bought the cheapest railroad lands or who located on homesteads in Dakota and Kansas, yet they were not wealthy, and they had to be satisfied for a number of years with the most primitive farm equipment and household conveniences. One of the pioneers of that time in writing of his early experiences says that as late as 1879, upon the arrival of the last party from Russia, their friends met them at the railway station with ox carts, only one driver being able to support a spring wagon. In course of time, however, they became quite prosperous, and just before the recent war, their lands sold at prices higher than those of any other Mennonite settlements of the West.

In 1900, there was rather a heavy emigration of younger families to Alberta, and in 1914, there was quite a movement to Montana. The entire Mennonite population about Mountain Lake and Butterfield is still about 2500. The village of Mountain Lake has become almost entirely a Mennonite town. Most of the business places are owned by Mennonites, and all the village officials usually with the exception of the constable are of that faith.

NEBRASKA

In Nebraska the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad Company played the same role in the immigration movement as did the Santa Fe in Kansas. Through A. E. Touzalin, the representative of the company, Cornelius Jansen and his son Peter, who were now temporarily located at Mount Pleasant, Iowa, were induced to choose the railroad lands of southeastern Nebraska as the most promising site for a settlement as well as for their own

home. As we have already seen, about thirty-five families of the Kleine Gemeinde group that was headed for Manitoba in the summer of 1874 was induced to remain over for several weeks at Clarence Center, New York, by Jansen, whose wife was of Kleine Gemeinde connections. In the course of a land inspecting tour through the western states during this summer, Jansen and the leaders of this company purchased 20,000 acres of railroad land, in what is now Jefferson county, from the Burlington.

They immediately settled upon the farms of their choice about the middle of August, half way between Fairbury and Beatrice, two small prairie villages. This was still virgin prairie at that time with but few houses between the two villages. Following their Russian custom and that of some of their Kansas brethren, they built their sod houses close together in village groups with names imported from Russia or Prussia, as Rosenort, Rosenhof, Heubuden, etc. Jansen himself at the same time bought several sections of land to the east of the settlement which he converted into a sheep ranch. In course of time, this venture became quite profitable for him. In the circular prepared by the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad Company and sent to Russia in the winter of 1874, the following signatures of settlers in this colony appear: Abraham Friesen, elder; Peter Friesen, Cornelius Friesen, Jacob Friesen, Peter Heidebrecht, Jacob Ens, Jacob Fast, Martin Barkman, Johan Thiessen, David Wiens, Jacob Claassen, Peter Krause, Peter Braun, Dietrich Isaak, Abraham Friesen, Abraham Reimer, Johan Thiessen, Peter Hildebrant, Peter Isaak, Abraham Friesen, Johan Rempel, Johan Heidebrecht, Peter Heidebrecht, Jacob Friesen. In 1877, another group was added to this settlement from Russia. The heart of the community for a number of years was called "Russian Lane" by the people of Beatrice and Fairbury.

The latter town remained the principal trading place for some years until 1887 when the Rock Island Railroad Company running a road through the "Lane" laid out a town in the heart of the colony on land owned by Jansen which the railroad company named in his honor, **Jansen**. It is to the credit of Peter

Jansen that into the deed for every lot that he sold, he wrote the stipulation that no saloon could be built thereon. And so this Mennonite village became one of the first saloonless towns in that state, which was one of the pioneer states to engage in the fight against the liquor traffic. As suggested, the town was settled exclusively by Mennonites and developed in course of time into one of the most progressive towns in that part of the state. Most of the children and children's children of the original settlers of the *Kleine Gemeinde* have since moved to Meade county, Kansas, leaving this region to the more progressive groups of other branches of the church, largely Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Brethren.

During the same year, 1874, but a little later in the fall, a second settlement of Mennonites was made near **Sutton** in York and Hamilton counties, near a colony of German Russian Lutherans which had been established there the year before. The land here also had been purchased from the Burlington & Missouri at a price a little higher than that of the Santa Fe in Kansas. Those who composed this settlement came from various villages in *Molotschna*, including some of the *Alexanderwohl* group who had found temporary quarters during the month of September in the state fair grounds at Lincoln. Like Topeka, Lincoln was the scene of considerable Mennonite activity during this month of September, and the center of considerable Mennonite interest on the part of townsmen; for hundreds of Mennonites were quartered here for a few weeks, though few of these remained in Nebraska. Most of the *Alexanderwohlers* went to Kansas, while many of the remainder found their way to Dakota. The *Daily State Journal* of July 29th, describes the group at the fair grounds as follows:

They seem well pleased with the country. They wear the simple garb of the German peasant, but have well filled wallets. The men are sturdy, healthy looking fellows. The women all wear calico gowns, with a blue handkerchief thrown over their heads, and no signs of ribbons or ear rings, or brooches, or even of wedding rings. Those articles are considered too worldly. Both

men and women are very stoop shouldered which we are informed comes from hard work, men and women working together at various employments. The party is not made up of all farmers, but many are clever mechanics, carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, etc. The *New York Herald* reports that the colony is bringing \$120,000 in gold with them; one of them when he landed had a draft for \$25,000 in gold; another had a draft for nearly as much; many had letters of credit for sums from \$1,000 to \$3,000.

There must have been several groups in this company and one of the groups must have been the Huterites who soon left for Dakota, for the reporter says further:

When they have selected their land they expect to erect a large two-story building, that being the plan used in the old country. They are reported to have all things in common, but this is contradicted and must be taken with allowance.

As has just been said, the larger part of this company at Lincoln found its way to Kansas and Dakota, but a remnant was left which founded the Sutton settlement. After five weeks in Lincoln, these arrived at Plymouth where they were housed temporarily by the Burlington Company in a large building which had done a similar service for the Lutherans the year before. The price paid for their railroad land here ranged from \$9.00 per acre near the Big Blue to \$4.00 some distance away. According to the railroad circular issued in December, 1874, as noted above, the settlers near Sutton consisted among others perhaps of the following family heads: Rev. Heinrich Epp, of Elizabethtal; Peter Abrahams, Gerhard Toews, Abraham Heinrichs, Benjamin Ratzlaff, Gerhard Abrahams, Peter Pankratz, Absalom Martens, Peter Lander, of Hierschau; Cornelius Funk, Benjamin Nachtigal, Jacob Janzen of Hierschau, Johan Janzen, Jacob Friesen, Johan Friesen, Peter Wolf, Gerhard Pettger, Jacob Fast, Lichtenfeld, Johan Sperling, Cornelius Wahl, Jacob Wall. The nearest town to this settlement was Sutton, but in 1878 Henderson was founded right in the heart of the colony, which is now also largely a Mennonite village. Each year after the first there were a few addi-



Heinrich Epp, Founder of the Henderson, Neb., Colony



Dietrich Gaeddert and Wife

tions to the colony though never very large. In 1875, only fifteen families came to Nebraska.

Neither of these two Nebraska colonies had a rapid growth during the first years. One of the objections to Nebraska often emphasized by those interested in other states was the fact that water could be secured only from deep wells. To overcome this objection, the Burlington Railroad Company finally agreed to furnish a deep well for a number of 160 acre farms. A letter written in September, 1875, by Isaac Peters, who had cast his lot with the Nebraska settlement at Henderson, to his friend in Russia, Leonhard Suderman, deputy of 1873, throws an interesting side light on some of the rivalries among the different settlements at this time. Speaking of Warkentin's report that most of the Henderson settlement had been drowned out, he says only one settler who had built too near the creek bottoms had any difficulty with the water. Warkentin, he says, does not know Nebraska and is prejudiced in favor of Kansas. There is too much *Agenterei*, Peters continues, in the whole land business. He thinks every one can suit his tastes. Those who like a warm climate can choose Kansas; those who like it cold can go to Minnesota; while those desiring a moderate climate will come to Nebraska.

From both of the above colonies, there has been considerable migration. From Jansen, as we saw, many have gone to Meade county, Kansas; from Henderson many have gone to California in recent years.

In addition to these two Russian colonies, there is one of Prussians who located in Gage county near **Beatrice** in 1877. These Prussians were a part of the group that arrived at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, in 1876, under Elder Johan Andres who died in Mt. Pleasant that same year. In February of the next year, about thirty-four families under the direction of Cornelius Jansen located in the county above mentioned. For many years Gerhard Penner served as elder of the several congregations that developed in course of time about Beatrice. In 1884, about ten families from the Chiva colony in Turkestan joined this settlement.

IX.

ESTABLISHING FRONTIER HOMES

MANITOBA

Eastern Reserve

The first group of sixty-five families to arrive at Winnipeg in the early part of August, 1874, as already indicated, were the source of considerable curiosity at that frontier post. Although the later landing place for the immigrants to the Eastern Reserve was located near the mouth of the Rat river, some miles south of Winnipeg, yet this first party, after unloading some of its baggage at this landing place, continued its way to the trading post for the purpose of laying in a supply of necessary provisions and household and farm utensils for the first winter, and incidentally also to have their pictures taken, no doubt at the request of William Hespeler who had the party in charge. Here they encamped for a few days along the banks of the river, while the men of the party were making the necessary purchases. *The Manitoban* for August 15, describes them as looking

picturesque enough as they ran about the beach engaged in various occupations. Hearty looking girls in blue cotton dresses, mostly bare legged, were engaged in washing clothes in extemporized buckets or in the river, and cooking over gypsy fires. The men were mostly away purchasing stoves and implements in the town, or looking up locations. A pile of sacks of flour was stacked against the company's warehouse awaiting carriage to the reserve.

Idle curiosity, however, was changed to genuine interest among the merchants of the town when these big German-Russian farmers began to exchange their gold freely for provisions and groceries and such implements as scythes, hayforks, stoves, coffee mills, and frying pans. One hardware store, *The Manito-*

ban says, sold four thousand dollars worth of implements in one day. The same paper for August 20, states that the "first batch" of Mennonites spent over twenty thousand dollars in the town within the three days previous; one item being fifteen hundred for stoves; another three thousand for wagons; and still another the purchase of thirty head of cattle. Horses, cattle, and all live stock brought a high price because of the Mennonite demand.

Soon after this party found its way to the lands which had been reserved for them east of the Red river, other large groups disembarked at the Rat river landing, and found their way several miles east to the immigrant houses which the Canadian government had erected near the present village of Niverville for the accommodation of the immigrants. This so-called Eastern Reserve of eight townships was located between the present towns of Niverville on the west, and Giroux on the east, with the Rat river flowing through the southwestern corner. The land for the most part was low and swampy, with a sandy ridge of somewhat higher ground crossing the southern tier of townships. To the east were found numerous small groves of poplar and pine which for many years furnished both fuel and building material.

The first task of the newcomers after they had become temporarily settled in the immigrant house, and had equipped themselves with oxen and wagons and a few of the most necessary agricultural implements, was to form themselves into agreeable village groups, select the exact location for their future homes, and begin the erection of their first shelter for the winter. It was already late in the fall, and if they were to finish their houses before the winter snows set in they had no time to lose. Their first dwellings were crude affairs designed primarily to keep out the winter frosts. Some were dug partly in the earth, and partly above ground with a sod roof; others were crude shelters made from the pine or poplar saplings in the near-by groves, which they lined on the outside with manure; a few were built entirely of logs. A Mr. Dick writing of these primitive huts many years afterward in the *Steinbach Post* says that the house in which he lived as a boy was a log cabin with the gable ends enclosed with

boards which his father had brought from Winnipeg. As these boards cracked in the winter from the frosts, they "were often scared, and thought of the Indians we had heard so much about in the old country."

Following their European custom, the settlers all grouped themselves into villages consisting of from fifteen to twenty families each who had agreed among themselves to form such a community. One of the earliest, and later one of the most important of these villages was Steinbach near the northeastern corner of the Reserve, consisting of eighteen families. The houses in this village were built on both sides of a street ninety-nine feet wide and one mile long, and surrounded by ten-acre lots which served the purpose of garden, barnyard, and flower plots. The farms were scattered about the cluster of farm buildings in narrow strips a half mile or a mile in length. After the houses were completed, a temporary shelter was also provided for the live stock, usually in a building whose roof was a continuation from that of the house. It was sometimes difficult, therefore, to tell which was house and which was stable, the only sure way of differentiating being to watch what came out of the door. After the farm village system had been abolished in the Eastern Reserve in 1909, Steinbach still continued as a trading center for the entire community, and is today the most thriving village in that entire region.

The first winter was one of great hardship for both man and beast. The hastily constructed houses and stables hardly kept out the intense cold to which the settlers had been unaccustomed in Russia. The frozen prairie grass which they had cut late in the fall for their winters' feed was of such poor quality that it contained little nourishment for their stock. Cold and famine reduced their herds by half before spring set in. Such cattle as survived were greatly weakened by their exposure to the winter winds, many having both tails and ears frozen.

The long and lonesome winter nights made the advent of spring doubly welcome; but even then the exiles longed for the familiar sights and sounds which reminded them of the pleasant and comfortable homes they had forsaken in Russia. One of the

early pioneers writing many years later of the disappointments of this first spring says that he missed especially the familiar song of the nightingale and the lark; though the call of the whippoorwill in a measure made up for the loss of the others. The dire poverty and utter lack of even the most necessary household conveniences did not lessen the homesickness of these pioneers during these first years.

*Mit Traenen seh ich an die Staette,
Die ich zum Wohnsitz mir erwachlt,
Kein Haus, kein Herd, kein Stuhl, kein Bette,
Kein Pferd, kein Vieh, kein Fleisch, kein Mehl,
Kein' Schuessel, Loeffel, alles fehlt,
Wie los bin ich auf dieser Welt.*

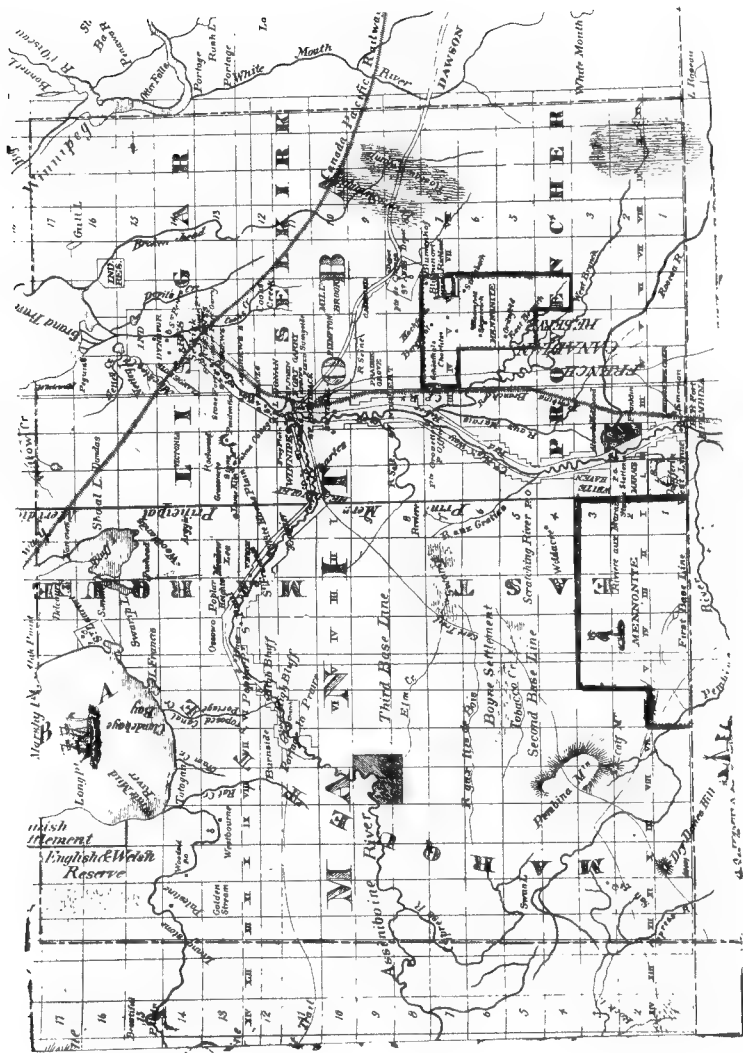
So wrote one of their number during the first year. The summer which followed only aggravated their poverty. A little of the sod had been broken and put to seed in the hope that they might raise at least a part of their food supply for the ensuing year. But in this hope they were keenly disappointed; for before the crop could be harvested it had been completely destroyed by an unusual invasion of grasshoppers. There were grasshoppers everywhere, in the houses, in the stables, and even in the wells. A light snow late in June it was hoped would at least compensate the damage it had caused by killing the grasshoppers; but when the snow melted away a few days later the unwelcome pests hopped forth evidently none the worse for their enforced period of rest under a blanket of snow.

In the meantime, additional immigrants were arriving in large numbers during the summer. The Western Reserve was opened to the colonists from Fuerstenland; and another large group of Kleingemeinders arrived at the Eastern Reserve, together with some from Chortitz. The second installment of Bergthalers, arriving late in the fall, remained among the Ontario Mennonites for the winter. The first payment on their Russian homes which the latter were to bring with them this year was not forthcoming, since the land sales had not yet been completed. This was a great disappointment to the Bergthal settlers in Manitoba and resulted in increased hardships. Appeals for help were

sent to eastern Mennonites, both in the United States and in Ontario, as well as to the Canadian government, not only for the actual necessities of life but also for money with which to buy farm equipment, and seed for the spring sowing. The Mennonites responded liberally with gifts during the year while the Ottawa government granted a large loan which tided the new settlers over their first years of poverty.

The year 1876 was one of somewhat brighter prospects. Although the grasshoppers again appeared, they did much less damage than the year before; and some grain and considerable hay was harvested for the coming winter. Each succeeding year was a little better. More prairie was continually broken. New villages were established as additional immigrants arrived. By the fall of 1877, according to the report made to the Minister of Agriculture by J. Y. Schantz, over five thousand acres had been put under cultivation, and the settlement by that time consisted of seven hundred families, grouped into thirty-eight villages. Among some of the earliest of these villages, many of the names of which had been transplanted from Russia were Blumenort, Steinbach, Blumenhof, Gruenfeld, Hochfeld, Bergthal, Rosenfeld, Chortitz, Steinreich, etc.

Each year, too, some improvement was recorded as living conditions became a little easier. In 1876 two windmills for grinding flour were erected, one at Steinbach, and the other at Blumenort. It was now no longer necessary for the settlers to import their flour from up the Red river some hundreds of miles away as before. Soon one of the windmills was replaced by another of steam. At the same time several farmers bought harvesting machines, and in 1877 a man by the name of Friesen purchased a threshing machine. Hand labor was gradually replaced by machinery as the farmers increased the area of their plowed fields. And so, the settlement grew and prospered continuously from year to year. By 1879 the colony had increased to forty-five villages; the area under cultivation had grown to nine thousand acres; and the total amount of grain harvested for the year was 184,200 bushels.



Map of Manitoba in 1876

One of the most significant events in the early history of the Eastern Reserve was the visit in 1877 of Lord Dufferin, the distinguished Governor-General of Canada. This visit left a deep impression on both the visitors and the visited; and was long remembered especially by the Mennonites as an occurrence of unusual importance to their pioneer settlement. For some years the Mennonite communities on both sides of the Red river remained one of the show places for distinguished visitors to the province. And so, when the Governor-General honored Manitoba with his presence at the time above mentioned the Provincial authorities arranged a tour across the prairies to the Eastern Reserve as one of the chief points of interest. William Hespeler saw to it that the Governor-General should be accorded all the recognition demanded by his high station. Several days before the proposed visit he went out to the Mennonite settlement to arrange the details of the reception, all of which was duly published in the Winnipeg papers. From the files of these papers we gather the story of the visit which took place on August 21.

Dufferin's party, which included his wife and several other ladies of high rank, and the leading Provincial officials, all mounted on horses, spent the first night of the journey about half way between Winnipeg and the Reserve. The next afternoon as they approached the place designated for the formal reception, the party was met by a cavalcade of young Mennonites on horses who escorted the visitors to the place of meeting which was on a raised elevation from which twelve of the Mennonite villages could be plainly seen. A platform had been erected for the reception ceremonies, covered with an arbor of evergreen trees, and a background of white against which was placed in red letters the word *Willkommen*. All about were displayed beautiful flowers and the various products of the prairie farms. Above all floated the German and Canadian flags side by side.

Upon the arrival of the party at this platform they were first met by a group of young girls dressed in white, who gave each member a glass of tea seasoned with lemon according to the Russian fashion. After all were seated Jacob Peters, the Mennonite

spokesman, read a speech prepared in German, and translated into English by Hespeler who acted as interpreter for the occasion. In this brief address of welcome Peters summarized the reasons for the coming of the Mennonites to Canada. He spoke of the visit made by Hespeler to Russia in 1872; and the tour through Canada of the Committee of Twelve in 1873. These representatives, he said, were not slow in deciding in favor of Canada; for they were well pleased with the land, and especially grateful for the liberal promises of religious freedom made by the Canadian government. There are now one thousand and seventy-two families here, he said, and more are expected the coming year ¹.

To this address of welcome Lord Dufferin made an elaborate reply in English which Hespeler turned into German for the audience. Taking his cue from the Mennonite objection to war as a cause for leaving Russia he said:

Fellow citizens of the Dominion, and fellow subjects of Her Majesty: I have come here today in the name of the Queen of England to bid you welcome to Canadian soil. With this welcome it is needless to say that I should couple the best wishes of the Imperial government in England or the Dominion government at Ottawa, for you are well aware that both have regarded your coming here with unmitigated satisfaction. You have left your own land in obedience to a conscientious scruple, nor will you have been the first to cross the Atlantic under the pressure of a similar exigency. In doing so you have made great sacrifices, broken with many tender associations, and overthrown the settled purposes of your former peacefully ordered lives; but the very fact of your having manfully faced the uncertainties and risks of so distant an emigration rather than surrender your religious convictions in regard to the unlawfulness of warfare, proves you to be well worthy of our respect, confidence and esteem. You have come to a land where you will find the people with whom you associate engaged indeed in a great struggle, and contending with foes whom it requires their best energies to encounter, but those foes are not

¹On both sides of the river no doubt.

your fellow men, nor will you be called upon in the struggle to stain your hands with human blood—a task which is so abhorrent to your religious feelings. The war to which we invite you as recruits and comrades is a war waged against the brute forces of nature; but those forces will welcome our domination, and reward our attack by placing their treasures at our disposal. It is a war of ambition—for we intend to annex territory after territory—but neither blazing villages nor devastated fields will mark our ruthless track; our battallions will march across the illimitable plains which stretch before us as sunshine steals athwart the ocean; the rolling prairie will blossom in our wake, and corn and peace and plenty will spring where we have trod. But not only are we ourselves engaged in these beneficent occupations—you will find that the only other nationality with whom we can ever come into contact are occupied with similar peaceful pursuits. They like us are engaged in advancing the standards of civilization westwards, not as rivals, but as allies; and a community of interests, objects, and aspirations has already begun to cement between the people of the United States and ourselves what is destined, I trust, to prove an indissoluble affection. If, then, you have come hither to seek for peace—peace at least we can promise you. But it is not merely to the material blessings of our land that I bid you welcome. We desire you to share with us on equal terms our constitutional liberties, our municipal privileges, and our domestic freedom; we invite you to assist us in choosing the members of our Parliament, in shaping our laws, and in moulding our future destinies. There is no right or function which we exercise as free citizens in which we do not desire that you should participate, and with this civil freedom we equally, gladly offer you absolute religious liberty. The forms of worship you have brought with you, you will be able to practice in the most unrestricted manner, and we confidently trust that those blessings which have waited upon your virtuous exertions in your Russian homes will continue to attend you here; for we hear that you are a sober-minded and a God-fearing community, and as such you are doubly welcome among us. It is with the greatest pleasure that I have passed through your villages, and witnessed your comfortable homesteads which have arisen

like magic upon this fertile plain; for they prove indisputably that you are expert in agriculture, and already possess a high standard of domestic comfort. In the name then of Canada and her people, in the name of Queen Victoria and her empire I again stretch out my hand to you, the hand of brotherhood and fellowship, for you are as welcome to our affection as you are to our lands, to our liberties and freedom. In the eye of our law the least among you is the equal of the highest magnate in our land, and the proudest of our citizens may well be content to hail you as his fellow countrymen. You will find Canada a beneficent and loving mother, and under her fostering care I trust your community is destined to flourish and extend in wealth and numbers through countless generations. In one word, beneath the flag whose folds now wave above us, you will find protection, peace, civil and religious liberty, constitutional freedom and equal laws.

After the Governor's reply a chorus of school girls sang a song of welcome. A teacher of another school then presented Lady Dufferin with a copy-book containing specimens of pencil drawings by every one of the pupils of her school, which the grand Lady received with evident pleasure. Several other small girls then presented all the ladies of the party with bouquets of home grown flowers which were kindly received, and gratefully acknowledged in German by Lady Dufferin and several others. The party then withdrew, and camped on the prairie near by for the night. The next morning after visiting several of the nearest villages, the party broke camp and started out on the return trip over the prairie to Winnipeg some thirty miles away.

This visit evidently deeply impressed the Governor-General as well as the Winnipeg committee which had the party in charge. The Winnipeg papers gave this part of the Governor's visit to Manitoba a leading place in their news columns. At the end of the tour through Manitoba which lasted several weeks, the Provincial officials and the citizens of Winnipeg gave a farewell banquet in honor of their distinguished guests at which the Governor-General again in the course of a long speech paid the Mennonites a most eloquent tribute which was heartily applauded by his

hearers. One might regard the flattering remarks made to the Mennonites themselves on their Reserve as nothing more than the usual conventionalities exchanged on such occasions; but the speech delivered at Winnipeg to the citizens of the town, with the nearest Mennonite more than thirty miles away could not be regarded as mere flattery. From the *Winnipeg Free Press* we gather the following remarks relating to this phase of the subject:

Although I have witnessed many sights to give me pleasure during my various progresses through the Dominion, seldom have I beheld any spectacle more pregnant with prophecy, more fraught with promise of an astonishing future than the Mennonite settlement. (Great applause) When I visited these interesting people they had been only two years in the Province, and yet in a long ride I took across the prairies which but yesterday was absolutely bare, desolate and untenanted, and the home of the wolf, the badger and the eagle, I passed village after village, homestead after homestead furnished with all the conveniences and incidents of European comfort and a scientific agriculture; while on the other side of the road were cornfields already ripe for harvest, and pastures populous with herds of cattle stretching away to the horizon (Great cheering). Even on this continent, the peculiar theatre of rapid change and progress, there has nowhere, I imagine, taken place so marvelous a transformation (renewed cheering); and yet when in your name and in the name of the Queen of England, I had these people welcome to their new homes, it was not the improvement in their material fortunes that preoccupied my thoughts. Glad as I was to have the power of applotting them so ample a portion of our teeming soil which seems to blossom at a touch (continued applause) and which they are cultivating to such magnificent advantage, I felt infinitely prouder in being able to throw over them the aegis of the British constitution (loud cheering), and in bidding them freely share with us our unrivalled political institutions, our untrammelled personal liberties (renewed cheers). We ourselves are so accustomed to breathe the atmosphere of freedom that it scarcely occurs to us to consider and appreciate our advantages in this respect. It is only when we are reminded by such incidents, as

that to which I refer of the small extent of the world's surface over which the principles of parliamentary government can be said to work smoothly and harmoniously that we are led to consider the exceptional happiness of our position. (Hear, Hear)

Lord Dufferin's enthusiastic description of the material prosperity of the Mennonite villages with "all the conveniences of European comfort and scientific agriculture," and "pastures populous with herds of cattle stretching away to the horizon" must not be taken too literally, however. While the settlers of the Eastern Reserve succeeded in placing their colony upon a firm basis, yet for many years their marginal profits were not large. The heavy rains of the first years made it next to impossible to raise any crops from the low, swampy fields. In the early eighties many of the settlers crossed the Red river to the Western Reserve, locating to the east of the Fuerstenlanders. Two of the poorest townships were never taken up at all, and reverted back to the Government again. On the higher ground wheat growing became profitable, while on the lower ground cattle raising and dairying became the leading pursuits, for which Winnipeg furnished a good market. And so in the course of time the colonists arrived at a fair degree of material prosperity, though in neither Reserve did the Mennonites of Manitoba ever approach the economic well-being of their brethren in the United States. This must be said for them, however; they succeeded far better than other groups in the same general locality. Steinbach, in the northeastern corner of the Reserve, a town without a railroad, is a much more thriving and prosperous center of trade than most of the French villages in that region with railroads.

Scratching River Colony

About thirty families of the Kleingemeinder group refused from the start to locate on the wet lands of the Eastern Reserve. These selected about a township of land in 1874 on the west side of the Red, along the Scratching river, near the present town of Morris. Here they established twin villages, Rosenort and Rosenhof. At first they fared little better than their brethren to the

east. Although many of the later years were wet, yet this first year the Scratching was dry; deep water in this region was salty; the Red was six miles away; and so the only means of obtaining water was to dig shallow wells in the bed of the Scratching. In the course of time, however, they built up a rather prosperous community. Religiously they shared a common history with their *Kleine Gemeinde* brethren on the other side of the Red river.

The Western Reserve

Before the close of 1874 it was evident that the eight townships which had been reserved for the Mennonites east of the Red river would not be sufficient to accommodate all the immigrants who expected to come to Canada the following year. Besides, as already said, there was considerable dissatisfaction among many of the settlers with the poor quality of the soil in this locality. A further reservation of seventeen townships west of the river was accordingly added to the original grant on similar terms. This reservation consisted of some six hundred square miles of prairie land, beginning five miles west of the Red river, and immediately north of the International boundary line. The land here was a much more fertile soil than that of the Rat river region, but without any trees.

The major portion of the immigrants of 1875 located on this grant. These settlers came for the most part from the Russian colony of *Fuerstenland* under the leadership of their elder, Johan Wiebe. With these also came some from *Chortitz*, the old colony. According to the newspaper reports of the time about eighteen hundred immigrants landed at West Lynne, near the Dakota border during the months of July and August of this year. From the immigrant sheds here the new-comers immediately set out to select the sites for their new homes, and to erect their first rude houses. Since there was no timber near by, many of them built their first huts of sod, starting several feet below the surface, and piling up one block of sod after another, with a roof of like material, all supported by a few poles. A number of these sod huts did service for a half dozen years or more before they were replaced by more substantial buildings.

Many of the colonists were poor. Although they arrived too late in the fall to be affected by the grasshopper plague of this year, yet they, too, were obliged in the years to come to appeal both to the Mennonites of the East as well as to the Canadian government for aid. But gradually conditions improved. Every year new immigrants arrived. In 1876 there was an addition of one hundred forty-seven families, and in 1877 there were thirty-five. By 1879 the Western Reserve consisted of seven hundred fifty-three families, with a total wealth in buildings and live stock of \$338,865.00 nearly all of which had been created by their own labor in spite of the hard times of the early years. During all this time the nearest railroad was several hundred miles distant, while the nearest market, Winnipeg, was some fifty or sixty miles away.

This large settlement of Mennonites on the bare prairies of southern Manitoba was an object of even more interest to the inhabitants of the rapidly growing city of Winnipeg than were those to the East. Up to this time it had been thought impracticable to make a settlement on the open prairie; that proximity of woodland was necessary. No one had yet had the courage to locate on the bare open spaces far removed from fuel and building material. A settlement of native homesteaders had been made a few years previous along the wooded belt at the foot of Pembina Mountain, some sixty miles west of the Red river; but the prairie between the river and the mountain was still virgin soil, uninhabited save by the prairie hen, the muskrat and their kind. The Mennonites, whose forefathers had transformed the barren steppes of southern Russia into gardens of plenty, evidently feared neither the prairie loneliness nor the grasshopper plagues. They were the first settlers in Canada to prove that it was possible to found homes on the prairies as well as in or near woodland.

An editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* written in 1879 referring to this service which the Mennonites had rendered to the cause of colonization, called attention to the fact that as late as four years previous, at the time of the first Mennonite settle-

ment, the squatters along the Pembina mountain hardly dared to entertain the hope that the prairies between the mountain and the Red river some sixty miles away might perchance be settled within the next twenty-five years. But before that summer had passed, almost overnight, a long line of camp fires extending for miles along the open stretches announced to the lonely mountain settlers that thousands of Mennonites had spread themselves over some seventeen townships and had accomplished what others had not dared to undertake. "It is now 1879," the editorial continues, "and farms on that plain are hard to get and are as valuable as our much vaunted timber claims along the mountains."

Like their brethren on the east side of the river, the Fuerstenlanders also built their own mills, both wind and steam, and in course of time ground their own flour; and soon began to use improved farm machinery. Government officials and the newspapers everywhere praised their industry, and great economic worth to the Province. The grasshoppers they "accepted without a murmur" it was said. They were the first to introduce flax growing in Manitoba, a crop still harvested to some extent. Speaking of this contribution to the upbuilding of Manitoba a writer in the *Free Press* in 1876 says:

The Mennonites no doubt are the best settlers that have thus far come into the Province. No man could believe what these people have done in so short a time. From 10 to 20 miles away from the timber, they are already putting up substantial homes. Many of them already speak a good English. They seem contented and happy. In my three weeks' travel over the Province I have seen nothing as regards industry equal to the Mennonites.

When in 1892 they paid back their share of the hundred-thousand-dollar loan which the Canadian government had granted them in conjunction with their brethren on the Rat river reserve, the Minister of the Interior at that time marvelled both at the industry which enabled them to pay it back so soon, as well as the moral integrity which induced them to pay it at all. He called it an unparalleled case in the history of Canada, and said:

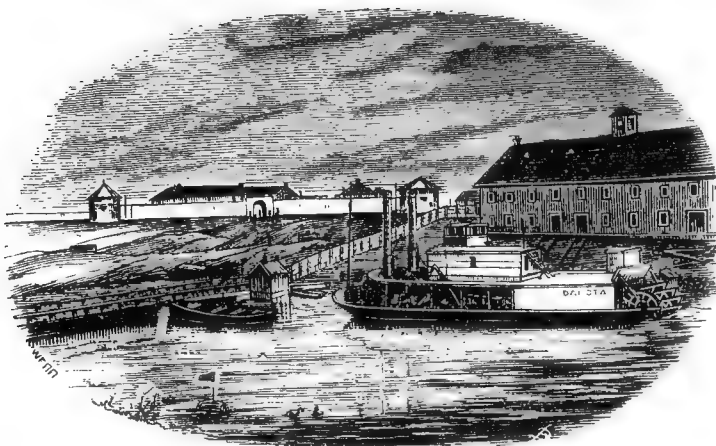
In all the history of our country there is not to be found a case in which a company or individual has more faithfully met his obligation to the government than has been the case here.....Not a single instance is known where one of the settlers or of the men who had given security made any attempt to withdraw from his obligations. It is moreover very pleasing to be able to add that as far as I know neither the persons who received the loan nor the citizens of Waterloo (Mennonite bondsmen) at any time made any attempt or ever expressed a desire to have the conditions changed or the time of payment postponed, as is so frequently the case where loans are made by the government.

The only fault found with them came from the tavern keeper at Smugglers Point on the International boundary line who complained that "they ain't no good to the country. They live on black bread and melons, and raise their own tobaker." The fact that others besides the owner of this pioneer hostelry were occasionally envious of Mennonite prosperity is shown by the popularity of a song that was well enough known along the Red river valley as early as 1876 to be sung off hand by the cabin boys on the river boats that plied up and down the Red at that time. From a traveller on one of these boats during that year we gather the verses of this song as it passed the lips of what he calls a "smart boy who could not sit many minutes quiet, but varied his amusements with the perpetration of practical jokes, singing snatches of song, and firing his revolver at stray prairie hens and black-birds, and finally broke out with a rattling ditty as follows":

The Mennon Bold

A beautiful home has the Mennon bold;
His harvest he reaps and he sells it for gold;
From lawyers bills and doctors pills,
He is free as the winds of the western hills.
The prairie is a beautiful land,
The chosen home of the Mennonite band.

He never would fight for Gortschakoff,
And the word of the Czar was—"Drill or be off"
O'er Gitsche-Gumee, then away came he,



Fort Garry in 1876



Entering Blumenort, Manitoba

With his Frau and his Kindt, to the land of the free.
The prairie is a beautiful land,
The chosen home of the Mennonite band.

The Metis² may laugh by the River Rat,
At his sheep skin coat, and his broad brim hat;
But he drives his steer, and he drinks his beer;
And a happy home is the home he has here.
The prairie land is a beautiful land,
The chosen home of the Mennonite band.

That the coming of the Mennonites was a great boon to the few small villages and trading centers that had sprung up a short time before along the banks of the Red river, of course is self-evident. A news item from Emerson, appearing in a Winnipeg paper on November 18, 1876, says that trade was quite active at that place during the week just past. "On Thursday over one hundred Mennonite teams were in town for supplies. They took over eleven hundred sacks of flour among other things." The same item continues: "It is a matter of great satisfaction to the merchants of Emerson also so that the dealers in Pembina (on the Dakota side) now enjoy less Mennonite trade since a Canadian customs office is stationed at Smugglers Point."

The well deserved reputation for industry which the Mennonites won for themselves from the start they have retained to the present time. A traveller coming south from Winnipeg about harvest time is struck as he arrives at Rosenfeld, the entrance to the Western Reserve from the north, by the almost entire absence of the yellow flower of Canada's most destructive thistle which is everywhere else so much in evidence in the wheat fields of Manitoba. The Mennonites are still unquestionably Manitoba's best farmers.

The first settlers on this Reserve also grouped themselves into villages. These villages which in course of time numbered some sixty were given the usual flowery names of Blumenort, Rosenthal, Rosenort, Blumenthal, Kleefeld, etc.; or names brought with

²A word meaning half breed.

them from their Russian or often Prussian homes, as Bergthal, Halbstadt, Einlage, and Heubuden; or perhaps something that characterized the particular place in which the village was located. Schanzenfeld honored their benefactor from Berlin, Ontario, Jacob Y. Schantz.

In the early eighties, a religious division occurred between the more liberal Bergthalers who as we have seen had located a short time before along the eastern border of the Reserve, and the more conservative Old Colonists in the Reinland district. About the same time, too, the village system of farming was abandoned by the more liberal element, about half of the villages being broken up. But in the Reinland district they have remained intact to this day with all their imported religious and social arrangements. In late years, however, nearly all these Old Colonists have left their villages for Mexico. It is likely that both the recent Russian immigrants who are taking the place of the Old Colonists who have left, as well as others who have bought these villages will ultimately abandon the old village system of farming. Along the northern and eastern edges of the Reserve on the Canadian Pacific railroad are to be found the railway stations of Gretna, Altona, Rosenfeld, Plum Coulee and Winkler, all of them up to date business centers, and most of them inhabited largely by Mennonites.

The Mennonite population expanded to the north beyond the original confines of the Reserve; but to the south it never crossed the international boundary line. Most of the surplus population, however, emigrated from time to time to the western provinces, especially Saskatchewan and Alberta. The emigration to the former began in 1893 when a few settlers from Manitoba located near the present village of Rosthern, north of Saskatoon. Others followed from the various groups in Manitoba including a large company of Old Colonists from the Reinland district who settled near Hague. In 1906 a colony of nearly five hundred Reinlanders located south of Swift Current. In the meantime Mennonites of various branches of the denomination from both eastern Canada and the United States have settled in this same general region.

Many of the Russians from Swift Current on the other hand have recently followed their Manitoba brethren to Mexico.

According to statistics taken from the *Mitarbeiter* of Gretna in 1918 the entire Mennonite population of German Russian descent in Canada at that time was as follows: Manitoba, 16,535; Saskatchewan, 8,698; Alberta, 347; British Columbia, 37; making a total of 25,717. Since that date, however, these figures have undergone a material change. Some five or six thousand have gone to Mexico; about two thousand Huterites on the other hand have migrated from the United States; and some fifteen thousand have come from Russia. Making allowances for all these changes, as well as for the natural increase of population since 1918, it would perhaps not be far from correct to estimate the entire Mennonite population of German Russian descent, including the recent immigrants, as around forty thousand for all Canada ³.

³Since the above was written a small group of Sommerfelders have left for Paraguay in South America, and more immigrants have arrived from Russia.

X.

TRANSPLANTING A BIT OF RUSSIA

The Mennonites, as we have already observed, had developed a unique civilization on the steppes of South Russia during the three quarters of a century that they had lived in that land. Permitted by the Czar to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences, to retain their own German language, to control their own schools, to be exempt from military service, and very largely to adopt such forms of local government as suited their own needs, they enjoyed a degree of autonomy almost unparalleled throughout the rest of Europe. Their political and social status, like that of other Germans in the same region, was almost that of a state within a state. Under this system of political and economic organization, they had grown prosperous; and had it not been for the loss of their military exemption, and the fear of further limitations upon their special privileges, they would have been content to remain indefinitely in the land of the autocratic Czar. They had no fault to find with their social and economic institutions.

This being the case, it was only natural that they should attempt to reproduce on the plains of America as much of their institutional life as possible. One distinctive establishment they tried out here was their Russian farm village. But since the railroad land on which the settlements were made on our western frontier was to be had only in alternate sections, and the homesteads, too, consisted of scattered farms, conditions were not favorable for successful village farming. Gnadenau in Kansas was the only example on this side of the international boundary line of an actual village of the Russian type. The so-called villages of the Alexanderwohl congregation were so in name only, although the farm houses were built close together, and the farms were divided into fields one quarter mile wide by one mile long instead

of the half mile square which constituted the normal 160 acre homestead. Sometimes smaller farms, of course, were divided into narrower strips, and houses might be closer together. One still finds an occasional farm in this region arranged after this pattern, a relic of these first divisions.

In a few cases such as Goldschar, a group of four Prussian families south of Newton, and Franzthal, a little family group in the Hoffnungsau congregation, the cluster of houses built close together on adjoining corners of neighboring farms was not an attempt at reproducing the Russian village, although such groups were usually given a distinctive name. In Nebraska, with the exception of Russian Lane among the Kleinemeinders near Jansen, there was no attempt at village life. In Dakota and Minnesota also because of scattered homesteads, and isolated railroad sections, there were no villages. Each farmer immediately located on his own farm according to the American custom, and often, of course, on homesteads already improved.

Such villages as were established did not survive long. In a few years even Gnadenu began to break up, and in course of time, the first generation of farm houses disappeared, and the narrow fields were exchanged for the larger compact areas necessary to form a modern American farm. Many of the old village names, however, have been retained for former village communities about Hillsboro and Goessel; and in a few cases farm houses are still built close together, on farms whose fields are narrow and long.

In Manitoba, however, conditions were better adapted to the reproduction of the Russian village system. In both Reserves Mennonites occupied exclusively large and compact land areas. The special concessions granted by the Canadian government to the settlers permitted a large degree of liberty in the matter of local institutions. The Old Colonists who located in these regions, perhaps, were more conservative also than were some of those who located in the United States. No doubt, for these various reasons, the village system became firmly established in all the Manitoba settlements from the start. At one time, there

were about one hundred all told on both sides of the Red river. In course of time, however, most of these, too, disappeared. But in the Reinland district in the Western Reserve, some twenty have survived to this day, retaining all the picturesqueness of their Russian prototypes, and all the local independence permitted by the Manitoban government. Since the system was most fully developed here, it might not be without interest to describe somewhat in detail a typical village as it appeared at the time when village life was at its best.

Both Reserves were first divided into the requisite number of village areas at the time of actual settlement as the land was required. All such divisions were made by lot. Then some fifteen to thirty congenial families, often relatives, organized themselves into a village group, to enter upon one of these areas. Since each head of a family, or adult male above 21 was entitled to 160 acres, more or less, the land area of a village community would consist of from 2,000 to 4,000 acres, and villages would be only a few miles apart. The typical village was built along a street 99 feet wide either on a section line or sometimes right through the center of a section. Each homestead was allowed a square of about ten acres for farm buildings, house, barn yard, and vegetable and flower garden. A strip of land the width of the building plot and extending throughout the length of the section, called the *Hauskagel* formed the nearest field. Each farmer was also given other strips enough to make up his 160 acres, and so distributed about the entire area that all fared equally both as to quality of land and also as to distance from the village. All made use of a common hayfield, and a common pasture where their cattle were taken care of by the village herdsman.

According to this system of land distribution, it will be seen most of the farmers did not own the land on which they had built their houses, nor which they cultivated. The government title which the farmer held was for a square of 160 acres, and not for the small strips into which they divided the land for cultivation. After securing complete legal title to their farms, no doubt it would have been easy to exchange titles so that each one might

have had legal possession of the various strips he cultivated. But this was never done except at the time the villages were abandoned. So long as the farmers lived together, most of them farmed the land belonging to their neighbors. Frequently the entire village was built on the farm to which one or two only had legal title. They were bound by regulations of their own, however, sanctioned by public opinion and church rules, which amply protected the interests of all those who built on land not their own.

The farm buildings, house, barn, stables and sheds, were usually built under one roof, with the house gable end facing the street occupying the front part of the long structure. Kitchen and stable were often uncomfortably near each other, though both were kept scrupulously clean. The house was a story and a half structure, with a steep roof beginning eight feet from the ground, and enclosing a spacious attic. The ceiling was often supported by heavy wooden beams because for a time the attic served as a granary where the farmer stored his wheat and rye for the winter.

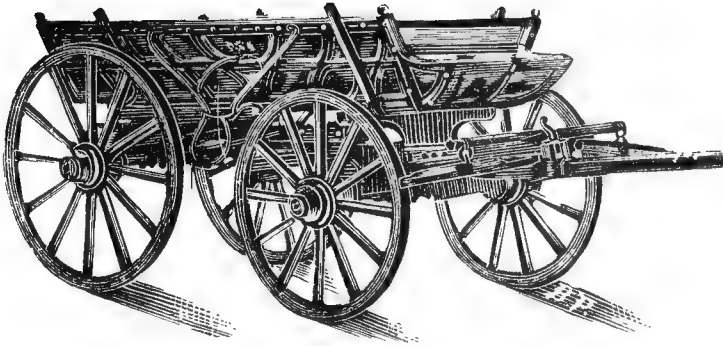
Within, the house was divided into at least three rooms, after the Russian fashion, including a big living room known as *die grosse Stube*, and such other rooms as the size of the family demanded. Everywhere one met familiar Russian household utensils and conveniences: the big linen chest, usually placed in a convenient corner of the *grosse Stube*; the big wall clock, often a family heirloom; the spacious brick *Ziegelofen*, built within the walls so as to heat three rooms and usually fed from the kitchen; the generous but cumbersome coffee mill; and in the kitchen highly polished copper kettles and platters in profusion.

In the barn yard, too, one found many reminders of farm life in Russia. Many of the first settlers brought their funny little farm wagons with them which according to a visitor to one of the settlements north of Newton in 1877, differed from the American vehicle in its short couplings, narrow "track," flaring bed painted green, and profusion of blacksmith work all over. These wagons were found for a time in most of the settlements, but were especially popular in Manitoba. The first colony to locate in the latter place, requested that a special shipment of 100 be sent with

the immigrants who came in 1875. When it was found, however, that the high freight charges brought the price of these wagons above that for which a better article could have been secured from South Bend, and further that the narrow gage made them impracticable for American roads, the order was never repeated. But the wagons being well made, remained a familiar sight in all the Mennonite colonies on the plains for many years.

For several years wheat and rye was threshed by means of big threshing stones. These, however, were not imported from Russia, but made locally. Dietrich Gaeddert and Peter Balzer in Kansas manufactured a car load of them at Peabody where there was an abundance of limestone. These consisted of large stone rollers with grooves cut along the outside circumference lengthwise giving it a corrugated effect. When drawn over the threshing floor with a team of horses, they would thus beat the grain out of the straw. Although this was an improvement over the flail, it was not long before modern threshing machines were found more economical than stone rollers. Occasionally one still finds one of these curiosities on isolated Kansas homesteads doing duty in the front yard as a flower stand perhaps or entirely forgotten in a neglected fence corner.

Most of these Russian contrivances were ill adapted to meet the needs of the American farmer, and did not long survive their first introduction. There was one institution, however, which the Mennonites brought over with them, the big brick heating oven, that was so well adapted to the life on the bare prairie where fuel was scarce, that it easily proved itself superior to any of the native American stoves for heating purposes, and has been retained in places to the present day. The question of fuel was always a serious problem among the pioneers on the western plains. There was neither coal nor wood near by, and to ship it in was so expensive as to make its use prohibitive. The early homesteaders were thus obliged to depend for fuel upon such burning material as they could pick up on the prairie—"buffalo chips," weeds, corn cobs, corn stalks, and occasionally even the corn itself. The ordi-



A Narrow Gauge Little Russian Wagon



An Old Russian Threshing Machine

nary American stove, however, was ill fitted to the use of this sort of fuel. But the spacious brick oven was designed for straw and grass of which there was a plentiful supply. These so-called ovens were constructed of heavy brick walls, and were so built into the partition walls of the house that the three main rooms were all heated by the same fire. Each morning and evening and perhaps occasionally at noon for an hour or more, straw or corn-stalks were fed into the spacious furnace until the surrounding brick walls were thoroughly heated. Being a poor conductor of heat, the brick retained its heat for many hours, thus keeping the house warm day and night. At first the natives spoke of these heating apparatuses as grass stoves because grass was used as fuel the first year of the settlement in Kansas. This grass oven was at least one of the possessions of the Russian Mennonite for which his Yankee neighbor had nothing but the highest admiration.

The settlers on the prairies of Manitoba did not confine themselves to the use of straw, but manufactured a fuel from manure. Since this fuel is still in use among the Old Colonists of the Reinland settlement, a description of how it is made may not be without interest here¹. All the manure of the barnyard is carefully preserved during the winter and piled up, and then is left until the next spring. When the frost has disappeared, it is spread out in a thick layer in the form of a large circle. Then horses are driven over it until the whole mass has been kneaded into a uniform consistency, water being added as necessary. Following that, a harrow drawn by a team of horses thins out the spreading circle to the required depth, when it is again rolled down to a solid mass with rollers, or by driving horses over it, and by the use of hand stampers. Then it is left to dry. In a few days this product is ready to cut up into fuel brick of the required width and length. After this the brick are piled up into pyramidal stacks of six or eight feet to dry. When thoroughly dried, these are then stored away for winter use. It is said that this is an excellent fuel without any objectionable odor or filth. On the Western Reserve where wood was scarce and expensive,

¹.See W. Rempel, *Bundesbote-Kalender*, 1898.

and the winters long and cold, this economical burning material had much to commend it.

As suggested elsewhere, the villages described above disappeared quite early among the settlements on our own frontier. But in Manitoba where conditions were more favorable for their maintenance, they survived longer and there are some still in existence. On the Eastern Reserve, the process of dissolution began in the late eighties and had been pretty well completed by the early nineties. A number of the farm villages in the Reserve, however, were retained as local trading centers. The American system of individual land holding, and the difficulty of separating the financial interests of the well to do from those of the poor when it was necessary to mortgage different plots of ground, made the semi-communal land system such as prevailed in Russia impractical here. With the passing of the farm village, went also the village hayfields and the common pasture lands with the village herdsman, and other picturesque features of the farm life of the period. Occasionally one still meets a suggestion of an earlier practice, however, in these modern business centers. Several summers ago while in Steinbach, the author was awakened early in the morning by the sound of a bugle call blown by a small boy coming down the street as he announced to the dairy maids that it was time for them to bring their cows out to the street to meet his growing herd as he drove it out of the village to the pasture near by.

In the Reinland district, however, as already observed, religious conservatism has been strong enough to preserve to this day some twenty of these old farm villages with all of their old economic and such political arrangements as have not been modified by later Provincial laws.

Closely connected with the village system was a rather distinctive type of local government also imported from Russia. In the settlements made within the United States with the exception of Gnadenau there was little demand nor opportunity for further regulations to control the civic and economic life of the settlers beyond that already provided for under the various state laws on

local government. In Manitoba, however, where as we have seen, the farm village was introduced in its entirety, and where the Canadian government permitted the largest degree of freedom in local government, the Mennonite communities introduced many of their distinctive Russian political as well as economic institutions. The following description of the local government of the Reinland colony written in 1877 by a member of that community is typical of all three of the Canadian settlements at that time, and differs very little from that still in vogue in the Reinland district at the time of the breaking out of the recent war.

In matters concerning the church, there is one bishop for the whole settlement, and seven ministers, which are elected for life, and preach the Word of God in their public meetings. In the management of affairs of the church, the bishop occupies the highest position and is looked to first in deciding and settling difficulties that may arise in the church. The bishop and preachers are chosen by lot by the church for life.

For the management of their temporal affairs, to see after roads, bridges, etc., the colony has a district office in Reinland. To fill this office the whole colony elects a general superintendent, each village a director and two assistants. A secretary for the district office is hired for a year. The general superintendent or director and the village directors or superintendents, as they are sometimes called, and their assistants are elected for two years. The general superintendent and the village superintendents are each paid a small salary.

The general superintendent gives all general orders, or when anything is to be done, the order is given through the secretary of the district to the superintendents of the villages who in turn make it known to the village. When matters of importance are to be attended to, the general superintendent through the secretary calls the village superintendents to a general conference in which all the village superintendents in the district must appear in Reinland, and sometimes also the bishop of the church takes part in the councils. The general superintendent, when considered necessary, makes known the proceedings of the council through the secretary to the superintendent of the villages, who in turn makes it known to the villages.

Ofttimes also when the proceedings are short and they can remember them without difficulty, the proceedings are delivered verbally to the village superintendents.

So long as everything goes on in peace, and all are obedient, the general superintendent and the village superintendents have only to give the needful instructions, but if any become disobedient and refuse to obey the instructions of the general village superintendent, they are, after they have been exhorted several times, given over to the bishop of the church. He again exhorts them to obedience. If they hear him, all is again well. If, however, they refuse to hear him, the bishop and general superintendent together visit them several times in order if possible to adjust the difficulties, sometimes also some of the ministers go with them to assist in settling the difficulty. If they hear these, all is well again; but if they refuse to hear them, they are called into the church before the whole congregation where the bishop is director of the meeting. The bishop presents the matter to the congregation and makes the necessary inquiries of them, and if the whole congregation agrees, when these disobedient persons are not willing to hear after the matter has been again seriously and solemnly presented to them, then these disobedient persons are excommunicated from the church until they become obedient, acknowledged that they have done wrong and ask for forgiveness. When an excommunicated person comes again in this manner penitent and sorry, he is presented before the congregation, and when he there makes his confession, he is again, according to the Word of God, received into the church.

The entire colony has an office for the care of the orphans, to fill which two persons are elected for three years. These have in charge all money of the orphans, widows and other weakly persons, which they loan out at five per cent. on good security and are required to keep a correct account of all their transactions.

The colony has a fire office to which a fire-overseer is chosen. In this office every family is secured, and a record is kept of the amount of property that each family has secured. When a fire occurs, the fire overseer makes an estimate of the percentage of the loss. He then reports to the village superintendents who collect the money and hand it over to the fire overseer who pays it

to the person who sustained the loss. Each village also has a school teacher who is employed for a year at such salary as they can agree upon. The bishop and ministers receive no pay.

The above is briefly an account of the manner in which our colony is conducted.

The local government described above, it will be observed, concerned itself with the local civic obligations of the members of the community, and not only with purely church matters. As with all strongly religious people, the government here approached that of a theocracy. Church officials exerted considerable influence in matters purely temporal; and the dividing line between things earthly and heavenly was not sharply drawn. The only means evidently of enforcing civic obligations as well as church regulations was the church ban. This might at first thought seem an inadequate force, but when it is remembered that in Manitoba excommunications were accompanied by a practice known as "Avoidance" which not only socially ostracized the excommunicated member from his fellows, but also cut him off from all economic and civil connection with the rest of the community, it will be seen that this was a most efficient weapon to insure civil obedience.

While the Mennonites on this side of the international boundary line did not adopt this form of local government, yet they established a number of charitable and philanthropic institutions not common to other small rural groups, such as hospitals, orphan homes, insurance companies, etc. Nearly every Mennonite community has its local hospital ranging in accommodations from a few beds to the magnificently equipped institution at Newton, Kansas, which is said to be one of the best in the state. The hospitals in Beatrice, Nebraska, and Mountain Lake, Minnesota, are not so large, but are also thoroughly up to date in every respect. Many of these are run on the plan of Deaconess Homes, the nurses serving for nominal pay. In addition there are a number of orphan and old peoples homes distributed throughout the various settlements both in the United States and Canada. Especially interesting, too, are the various fire insurance organizations es-

tablished quite early in the history of the settlements. The largest of these, the Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company, with its headquarters at Newton, founded in 1880, carried risks in 1926 to the amount of \$35,000,000.00, and is said to be today one of the largest and best managed mutuals of the state of Kansas. The Mennonite Aid Plan of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, is much smaller, but also a substantial and growing institution.

In their economic development, the Russian Mennonites passed through all the hardships incident to pioneer life on the prairies. They arrived on the frontier, just at the time in the middle seventies, when because of the panic of '73 and the grasshopper plague which followed, the economic prosperity of the western farmer was at its lowest ebb. What was loss, however, to the native homesteader sometimes became gain to the immigrant who came a few years later. The panic had reduced all prices to a low level, and the discouraged first settlers were often willing to sell farms, equipment and live stock at a small fraction of what they had cost them. It was a good time to stock up for those who came to buy and not to sell. From the grasshoppers, however, all suffered serious loss up to 1877. The Mennonites seemingly fared better than most others from the ravages of this pest, because having had much experience with them in Russia, they knew how to fight them here. The Mennonites were complimented by the natives all along the frontier for the skill and courage with which they met this common enemy. Some of the current comments are interesting. From a pamphlet published in 1878 by the Burlington & Missouri Railroad Company, we learn the following about the Nebraska colony:

When the Mennonites saw the first invasion of locusts in August (1874) of their first year here, they did not mind them in the least; nor have they manifested any concern or alarm since. The reason is they are familiar with them in Russia, and know how to fight them successfully. Some of their modes in addition to cutting ditches are as follows: In the spring as the locusts begin to appear, they are driven by pushing them with a brush or broom to the grass or prairie which is set on fire. The prairie fire is then put out, and as they appear day by day.

more locusts are driven to the grass which is also burned, and so on until all have been destroyed.

When the locusts are coming in from abroad in swarms, the Mennonites build small smoke fires with dry or damp straw or prairie grass, making fires at intervals of a few rods over a forty or eighty acre field. These fires or smokes are kept up until the locusts have passed over, and in this manner the crop is wholly or partially saved.

An editorial in the *Newton, Kansan*, in 1877, speaking of the grasshopper conventions that were being held at that time in that section of the state has this to say :

The Mennonites are not afraid of the grasshopper. He is an old acquaintance of theirs; and they kill him at once without holding mass meetings or writing complaining letters to the newspapers. With the Mennonites every year is a good year, and adds to their wealth. They wear plain, durable clothes and no jewelry, and within ten years every family will be rich. They are not crazy about "timber," and do not buy coal. Their fuel for cooking and for heat is prairie grass, and they have stoves in which it can be burned as well as we burn the best wood or coal.

Among the unusual dangers to which the first settlers were often exposed were prairie fires. In the early days before much of the sod had been turned under by the farmer's plow, vast stretches of prairie grass grown tall and luxuriant from the moisture of the spring rains, and later browned and dried under the summer sun, furnished by early fall a tinder as inflammable as powder. At such a time, it required but a match and a strong wind to start a conflagration that might last for days, and travel for miles devouring everything that came in its way—harvested grain, houses and barns, horses, cattle, and occasionally even human life itself. Nothing could stop it when once it got fairly started except a plowed field, a stream of water or perhaps a counter fire. Elsewhere we have seen that in Dakota in the first year of the settlement, there, a prairie fire had swept over the community causing a great damage. Such occurrences were not rare. D. E. Harder of Tabor College relates an experience of his when

as a small boy, he and his younger brother accidentally set fire to the prairie near their home in Gnadenau. The flame soon got beyond control and swept out over the field into the open prairie, destroying among other things their own wheat crop, at a time when his father was sorely in need of money to meet his obligations. Partly as a punishment, but more no doubt from necessity, the family that year went without their usual supply of sorghum molasses, eating their bread dry; a punishment no doubt sufficiently severe for a Russian Kansas boy of that day.

The main crop in the seventies all along the western frontier from Kansas to Manitoba was wheat—winter wheat in the south and spring wheat in the north. Most communities soon had their own flour mills—windmills as in Gnadenau for a few years, water mills as at Halstead or big steam mills later in Newton and elsewhere. Mennonites usually became expert millers, and did much to promote the milling industry throughout the West. It was through their influence also that the Turkey Red wheat, which is now the leading variety sown throughout the western states, was introduced from the Crimea.

In Nebraska and Minnesota, corn and oats alternated with wheat as a leading crop, but for a good many years, corn was not regarded with much favor by the Russians, due to a prejudice against the grain which they brought with them from their native land where it was known as *kukurus*, a Bulgarian word. Flax was also sown especially in the northern states.

The Mennonites everywhere believed in diversified farming, however, and tried to introduce as far as possible such products as they had grown successfully in Russia, or for which the American soil and climate seemed especially adapted. They raised a variety of vegetables whenever possible, both for their own use and later for the market. Every front yard was a flower garden, and a fruit orchard; while the potato patch and "truck" garden were not far away. Water melons which they called *Arbusen*, a Russian word, was a special favorite among them. The melon had been grown extensively in Russia for the market. Its cultivation was attempted here also in all the settlements even as far north

as Manitoba. But the soil and climate of Kansas seemed especially well adapted to its production. Noble Prentis in a visit to Alexanderwohl in 1877 reports a watermelon patch of 160 acres north of Newton. Prentis no doubt made free use of the Kansas prerogative of exaggeration that day, but it is a well known fact, nevertheless, that to this day in America *Arbusen* are still a great favorite among the Russian Mennonites.

Another delicacy of which they were very fond, and which they raised and manufactured in generous quantities was "sorghum molasses." Every community had its sorghum as well as flour mill. Speaking of one of these mills in the Gnadenau settlement in the early days, a local historian² reports that it served practically every family for miles around. Some families made as much as 100 gallons a year; "and it was all eat up too" he was informed.

The most interesting attempt, however, to introduce a Russian industry was the inauguration of silk growing in Kansas. This industry had been carried on with some success in Russia, and it was thought that climatic conditions were favorable in Kansas for its culture here. Both the State and Federal governments were interested in the experiment and gave it some encouragement. That the Mennonites had in mind the possibilities of silk culture from the start is shown by the fact that many of them planted mulberry trees during the first few years from seedlings which they had brought with them from their former homes. These trees were planted frequently along the boundaries of farms, thus serving as a field hedge as well as a possible source of food for the silk worm. For several years the *Zur Heimath* and other papers in circulation among the Mennonites advertised mulberry seedlings for sale, one grower at one time advertised 10,000. During the middle eighties it appeared for a time that the industry might develop to considerable importance in Kansas where the climate seemed especially favorable. The State legislature appropriated some \$20,000 for an experiment station at Peabody, the only institution of its kind in America. The silk which was pro-

²C. C. Janzen.

duced was pronounced of good quality according to silk merchants of Philadelphia and other eastern cities. The first product which was sent East to be reeled was made up into a fine piece of black silk and presented to the wife of the Kansas governor. But the governor's wife was about the only woman who had the honor of wearing a gown of home grown silk. The industry did not long survive the first flush of enthusiasm. While the climate seemed favorable, the worms had voracious appetites, and gathering mulberry leaves twice each day, Sundays included, seemed more irksome to the boys under the free skies of Kansas than it had in autocratic Russia. Growing wheat took less work. And so by 1890, what at one time promised a profitable business had been completely given up. All that reminds one today of this interesting experiment is the long rows of mulberry hedges about the fields of Mennonite farmers in central Kansas, and an old dilapidated frame building north of Peabody, once the home of the state experiment station.

GROWTH OF POPULATION

The Russian Mennonites not only grew in material prosperity; they also multiplied in numbers. Both in Russia and America they have held their own better than any other group in all Mennonite history, and for the same reason. In Germany, Holland, Switzerland and France, they have hardly held their own during the past two hundred years as a religious body, though no doubt they have equalled in natural increase the other population groups, in those countries. In America especially the Mennonite population growth has been above that of the average, even for the frontier. And few of the children forsook the faith of the fathers; but very little new blood was added either.

From an initial population of approximately 18,000 immigrants by 1884, the Russian Mennonite population, as well as Mennonite church affiliations, since the two have remained almost identical, has grown to about 70,000. This, it will be seen, is approximately a three-fold increase within less than fifty years; and is considerably larger than the average for America as a whole.

Frontier conditions, of course, with cheap lands and an unlimited demand for labor are favorable for a natural increase of the population to its biological limit. But in addition to this fact must be added also the Mennonite standard of large families. Even the proverbially poor do not exceed the Russian Mennonites in the size of their families. Church leaders usually set a good example to their flocks in this matter. The elder of one small branch of the denomination was the father of twenty-six children; the leader of another was the head of a family of twenty-two; seventeen was not uncommon; ten was an average family; while eight was regarded as small. Marriage was contracted early, and usually no one was either widow or widower long. A typical obituary notice of a departed Mennonite near Moundridge several years ago contained the information that in the month of June in a certain year the first wife of the deceased had died; that in the following September, three months later, he had married a second wife; and that a third survived. Such speedy remarriages were not uncommon for either widowers or widows. The historian of the Gnadenau community³ is authority for the statement that an elderly couple within that community at one time had married within three weeks of the funeral of the bridegroom's first wife. But such hasty marriages, he adds, are frowned upon by the Mennonite community.

In the old church book of the Alexanderwohl congregation with records dating back to the seventeenth century, provision is made in convenient spaces for recording in addition to dates of the birth, baptism, and death of the members, also for first, second and third marriages. It is surprising how frequently the third space was utilized in the records.

Under these conditions population increased rapidly. Church membership as just indicated kept pace with population growth, and was almost identical, since few children left the church, and none were added from the outside. This was true in Russia as well as in America. The term Mennonite might almost as well be applied to a special race, as to a body of religious beliefs. With

³C. C. Janzen.

few exceptions these Mennonites could trace their lineage back through Russia, Prussia to Holland in the sixteenth century. They were nearly all of Dutch extraction, and bore Dutch names. Very few new names were picked up in the course of their migration from the natives among whom they sojourned for a time. In Russia one of the conditions of their settlement was that they were to make no converts among their Russian neighbors. This request perhaps would not have been necessary; for Mennonites were never given to proselyting, and with the exception of the years of the beginning and within recent years, not even to much missionary zeal. There were other causes, however, which were sufficient to keep them a distinct people, separate from the rest of the world both in Russia and western America. Among these causes were—the practice of settling in compact communities; a foreign language shutting them off from social intercourse with their Russian or American neighbors; self sufficing social and economic units; a parochial school system which developed within them a sense of group consciousness and social solidarity; a strong sense of other worldliness; and often church rules which forbade marrying outsiders. All these forces tended to keep Mennonite children within their own church, and others out. For these reasons, church growth was nearly identical with population increase among the Russians and their descendants. There is hardly a single native American name to be found among the western Mennonites. Nor a Russian name. Such unusual Polish names as *Sawatski* and *Rogalski* can be traced back no doubt to some native hired man in Poland or Russia who fell in love with his employer's daughter and came into the fold through the back door so to speak.

The best evidence of the truth of the statements made above is found in a study of the most common names among the Russian Mennonites in the West. The following study is not exhaustive, and is by no means meant to be more than a mere casual, though suggestive list of typical names. The list covers perhaps representatives of nearly all immigrant families. From a list of about 1,500 families, whose names were taken from the telephone direc-

tories in the Mennonite settlements of central Kansas the following results have been obtained. The number following each name indicates the frequency of the names in the directory: *Schmidt*, 105; *Unruh*, 68; *Regier*, 58; *Voth*, 49; *Schroeder*, 46; *Janzen*, 39; *Friesen*, 39; *Klaassen*, 38; *Goering*, 37; *Thiessen*, 35; *Nickel*, 32; *Koehn*, 32; *Penner*, 32; *Stucky*, 32; *Ratzlaff*, 32; *Neufeld*, 28; *Reimer*, 27; *Buller*, 25; *Toews*, 22; *Krehbiel*, 22; *Pauls*, 22; *Ediger*, 22; *Harms*, 22; *Funk*, 26; *Franz*, 20; *Pankratz*, 19; *Duerksen*, 19; *Balzer*, 19; *Goertz*, 18; *Enns*, 17; *Esau*, 17; *Dick*, 17; *Ewert*, 16; *Marten*, 15; *Harder*, 14; *Heidebrecht*, 20; *Regehr*, 12; *Adrian*, 12; *Dyck*, 11; *Epp*, 11; *Flaming*, 11; *Froese*, 11; *Siemens*, 11; *Willems*, 11; *Wiebe*, 11; *Suderman*, 10; *Boese*, 9; *Kroeker*, 9.

The following have eight each: *Dirks*, *Doerksen*, *Enz*, *Goosen*, *Hein*, *Nachtigal*, *Quiring*, *Schierling*. Seven is the number of these: *Claassen*, *Fast*, *Foth*, *Richert*. These have six: *Fehdrau*, *Gaeddert*, *Gaede*, *Hiebert*, *Krause*, *Unrau*, *Wedel*. The following have five each: *Andreas*, *Block*, *Baergen*, *Franzen*, *Janzen*, *Plenert*, *Warkentin*. A large number have four each: *Abraham*, *Bergen*, *Busenitz*, *Eitzen*, *Entz*, *Frey*, *Giesbrecht*, *Koop*, *Klein*, *Lepke*, *Lohrenz*, *Neuman*, *Schowalter*, *Reisen*, *Rempel*, *Rutchman*, *Wolke*, *Weims*. The following number three: *Braun*, *Cornelson*, *Gear*, *Gerbrand*, *Kliwer*, *Kornelson*, *Knak*, *Schultz*, *Thierstein*, *Vogt*. Number two is also a larger list: *Andreas*, *Bargen*, *Berg*, *Bestvater*, *Buhler*, *Deckert*, *Feil*, *Graves*, *Groening*, *Lepp*, *Krieg*, *Lehman*, *Letkeman*, *Moultet*, *Petker*, *Plett*, *Prieb*, *Schneider*, *Voss*, *Thimm*. Of the following there is but a single representative in the telephone directory: *Arnt*, *Aurenheimer*, *Barkman*, *Banman*, *Dalke*, *Goertzen*, *Guhr*, *Goerzen*, *Hauck*, *Kaiser*, *Kasper*, *Lange*, *Neuenschwander*, *Stelling*, *Tieszen*, *Latschar*.

Canadian family names do not seem to differ much from those in the United States. From the directory at Steinbach in the Eastern Reserve the following are taken: *Reimer*, 47; *Penner*, 23; *Toews*, 23; *Friesen*, 18; *Barkman*, 15; *Plett*, 15; *Loewen*, 10; *Giesbrecht*, 9; *Wiebe*, 8; *Goosen*, 6; *Unger*, 7; *Kroeker*, 5;

Cornelson, 5; *Brand*, 5; *Dyck*, 4; *Koop*, 4; *Wohlgemuth*, 4; *Bartel*, 3; *Klaassen*, 3; *Regier*, 3; *Ehns*, 2; *Thiessen*, 2; *Funk*, 2. The following consist of one each: *Duerksen*, *Eidse*, *Esau*, *Fast*, *Kliwer*, *Klippenstein*, *Nefeld*, *Schellenberg*, *Suderman*, *Warkentin*, *Peter*, *Froese*, *Goertzen*, *Janzen*, *Janz*, *Regehr*, *Sawatski*, *Schultz*, *Weideman*.

The following casual comments may not be out of order regarding the above. *Schmidts* seem to be concentrated about Goessel, Kansas, and are not numerous elsewhere. Such names as *Klaassen*, and *Claassen*, and *Regier* and *Regehr* are really the same name though spelled differently. The above list includes a number of Swiss: *Goering*, *Stucky*, etc. *Krehbiel* might be either Swiss, Volhynian or Palatine, though few Palatine names appear here, among others *Showalter*, and *Latschar*. The list is not exhaustive, but merely suggestive, taken from only two regions, central Kansas and Steinbach, Manitoba ⁴.

⁴The Pretty Prairie Kansas Swiss Russian congregation not included in the above enumeration consists of the following members:

Graber, 43; Stuckey, 19; Albright, 13; Krehbiel, 11; Goering, 10; Schwartz, 9; Schrag, 8. The following number four or less: Flickinger, Kauffman, Unruh, Flickner, Voran, Waltner, Zerger, Prieheim, Ratzlaff, Soft (Polish), Wedel, Wenzel (German), Winsinger.

XI.

THE LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE

In Russia, as we saw, the Mennonites had almost complete control over their own schools. There was practically no interference from the Government in regard to either the subject matter of the curriculum or the language in which it was presented. The Bible and German consequently were both important subjects of study. The Russian language received scant attention in the schools before 1870. School and church were closely connected, the former being considered the handmaid of the latter; and the course of study was largely based on that assumption. The teachers were often ministers, and the ministers were usually recruited from the teachers. The prospects of losing this control over their schools with the exclusive use of the German language was one of the strong contributory factors to the emigration movement in the early seventies.

When they came to America, the Mennonites retained the same concern for the education of their children, especially in the fundamentals of religion. Settling as they did in compact groups on the unsettled frontier they had to found their own school system in most places. In such large colonies as Alexanderwohl, Hoffnungsau, Gnadenau and other settlements private schools were of the most primitive sort, of course, though usually conducted by experienced teachers from Russia, such men as Johan Harder, in Gnadenau, Peter Balzer, Heinrich Banman and Cornelius Wedel in Alexanderwohl, and such young men as H. R. Voth, H. H. Ewert, H. Dalke and others who soon entered the work here. The schoolroom was often the "Big Room" of the teachers' own home, and the pay scant. The material equipment was meager and homemade. The few textbooks extant were first such as had been brought from Russia supplemented soon by

others. The term was for a few months only, and the language of course was German.

It soon became evident, however, that conditions in the United States differed from those in Russia, and that the colonists would need to adapt their school system to the new situation. Each state had a public school law which, although it was quite liberal at first, yet necessitated a modification of the educational program of the Mennonites. In the first place the public schools were taught in the English language; and except in solid Mennonite districts there was little attention paid to the teaching of religion. For several years, too, Mennonite teachers were not able to qualify for positions in the public schools for lack of preparation, though that deficiency was remedied in course of time. In some regions also Mennonites objected to lady teachers, since these were an innovation entirely foreign to their experience in Russia where the women were to follow to the letter the Pauline injunction to be silent. On the other hand the public school had its advantages, even in solid Mennonite communities since it could be supported by public taxation, while the private schools had to depend upon voluntary contributions and tuition. And so the public and private school systems were in competition from the start for a few years. In compact Mennonite communities there were many districts where the district schools were organized almost immediately, although some hesitated to do so because in order to be eligible the organizers would need to take out citizenship papers, a step most of the immigrants were slow to take during the early years.

The first stage, therefore, in the history of elementary education of the western Russian Mennonites was that of the private school during which some private teacher conducted a school in his own home, or even in a school building as at Gnadenau in 1874, and in Gruenfeld the following year, for a few months in the winter. This was not a universal practice, however. In some places the private school never got a start. In others where there were only a few non-Mennonites or none, both the German and the Bible were provided for on the daily program of the

regular district schools, since the school laws at first were everywhere quite liberal. The curriculum of these private schools consisted of German language study, Bible study, writing, arithmetic, and occasionally one or two other elementary subjects. There was no uniformity of texts, little supervision of teachers, and no standards of teaching. It was for the purpose of discussing the question of texts and other school problems that a meeting of Kansas teachers was called in 1877 at the home of Rev. Heinrich Richert, in Alexanderwohl. The close connection between school and church is shown by the fact that preachers were invited to meet with the teachers in this gathering, and the former took a leading part in the discussion. Out of this teachers' meeting grew the Kansas Conference of Preachers which later merged into the Western District Conference.

The recommendations of this meeting are interesting, and were incorporated in a set of resolutions passed a few months later at a conference held in the district schoolhouse of the same community, and which was attended by some seventy Kansas preachers and teachers. This conference made the following recommendations:

a. Where Mennonites are in the majority in a school district, and are in a position to exert a deciding influence, it is suggested that they organize school districts; but no recommendations are made in the matter of taking out citizenship papers.

b. Where it is impossible to wield a controlling influence in the public schools, Mennonites are urged to organize their own church schools.

c. The conference recommends the learning of the English language as well as the German for a double reason—(1) in order to facilitate communication with the American neighbors; and (2) so that they may help to extend the Kingdom of God among the English speaking people.

d. It is the opinion of the conference that in the matter of financial support the entire congregation in which the school is located is under obligations to assume this task as a common burden.

The school committee which had been appointed at the pre-

vious meeting reported on uniform textbooks, and repeated the hope expressed at that meeting that steps might be taken for the establishment of a *Central-Schule*, a teachers' training school after the pattern of those in Russia. This committee, consisting of Peter Balzer, Heinrich Banman and other experienced teachers, also submitted a suggestive program to be adopted in the school-room as follows:

MONDAY. Forenoon. The exercises each day should be opened and closed with prayer and song. During the first hour Bible history is taught in which all the children take part. During the second hour, while both the first divisions are engaged in reading under the direction of the teacher, the smaller children are studying their primers, which they recite to the teacher after the other divisions have finished. It would be a decided advantage if some well-qualified upper classman could supervise the *Ueberlernen* (study) of the smaller ones. In the third hour the upper divisions practice writing, while the teacher devotes a part of his time to directing the number work of the smaller ones, and the remainder of his time to helping the scholars in their penmanship *Schoenschreiben*, giving necessary instruction, setting copies, etc.

MONDAY. Afternoon. In the first hour the upper divisions have arithmetic, and the smaller ones writing numerals. The teacher alternates oral and written number work between the divisions. During the second hour the upper divisions practice orthography (*Rechtschreiblehre*), while the smaller ones are given copy from the primer or New Testament to write out. The first part of the third hour is devoted to reading as in the second hour of the forenoon, and after that practice in singing.

TUESDAY. Forenoon. The first hour as on Monday. In the second hour the upper divisions are given language study, and the primary classes are engaged in *Ueberlernen*. In the third hour the upper divisions recite geography, and the small children are engaged in writing.

TUESDAY. Afternoon. The first hour as on Monday. During the second the upper classes have reading, and the smaller children desk study; the teacher in the meantime drills the primary classes in language study,

while the larger ones may copy their language sentences, etc.

WEDNESDAY. Same as Monday.

THURSDAY. Same as Tuesday.

FRIDAY. Forenoon. The first hour is given to church history. In the second hour there is practice in reading script, the copy being largely old letters from Russia. During the third hour the advanced classes have writing (*Schoenschreiben*) while the teacher hears the beginners recite their reading lessons.

FRIDAY. Afternoon. During the first hour the teacher reads for the children something about obedient children, or extracts from general history in order to show them how to read correctly with proper emphasis and intonation. During this time the beginners occupy themselves according to their pleasure with their slates. In the second hour the upper classes recite their memorized lessons such as songs, the catechism, etc. During the third hour the teacher outlines composition work for the advanced pupils which they are to hand in the following week. The children in the meantime are engaged in copying and then follow the closing exercises for the week¹.

This program to be sure is merely suggestive, but it no doubt is a fair sample of the curriculum and method of teaching in the private schools during the first few years. These schools were found in all of the Mennonite settlements, though more numerous in Kansas than in the other states.

Mennonite education passed into a second stage when the public schools were organized. Unwilling to support two school systems in the same community, but yet desiring more German and religion than the district schools provided, most of the Mennonite congregations solved the problem by co-ordinating the two systems as best they could. This was not so difficult during the early years when in most states the school year was only three or four months in length, and the laws regarding curriculum extremely liberal. In some cases Mennonite teachers utilized the

¹For a good history of Mennonite education see H. P. Peters, *History and Development of Education among the Kansas Mennonites*. This program is taken from Mr. Peter's book.

public schools to teach a few hours of German each week, and also some religion during the regular program. The *Bruedergemeinde* Conference of 1883, representing all the congregations of that branch of the church in America, recommended that these extra subjects be provided for during the regular school year by adding one hour before and another after the regular program for the day as required by law. In most cases in the other branch of the church, however, this instruction was taken care of by organizing vacation schools after the regular year had closed. In these schools, of course, religion and German were given full sway in the curriculum, and little else was taught. The geography of Germany and Palestine were regarded as essential to the program. The elements of singing were taught from the church hymnal. Where the German school was intended to substitute for the regular district school as it did in some cases, secular branches were added to the curriculum. Up until the passage of a seven months' law, as was the case in Kansas in 1911, it was not found difficult to maintain the special German schools; four or five months of public school still left room for several months of German without unduly extending the year for the children. With a seven-month period for the regular district school, however, it became increasingly difficult to maintain a double system.

One of the difficult problems which faced these German schools was that of support. Money was secured in various ways. Sometimes a teacher would open a school upon his own responsibility and if he was a popular instructor and his tuition charges were sufficiently high he might make nearly as much as the hired man during the summer months. Frequently one or more congregations selected a board whose business it was to collect the necessary funds to keep the schools going. This was the method officially recommended by the Western District Conference. The Conference also had a general fund to help such small congregations as could not afford to hire a teacher of their own. In the districts where there was a solid Mennonite constituency there was another method which prevailed for a time. The same teacher was hired for both the English public school and the parochial

German institution. He was paid more than the usual wages from the public treasury for the English months, with the understanding that he would serve during the German months for only a nominal sum. This method was likely to meet with serious objection, however, especially in case there should be one or two non-Mennonite families in the district, and to many it seemed like taking advantage of the State law. The Kansas Mennonite Teachers' Association disapproved of the method and it was finally dropped.

German vacation schools were kept up in many of the congregations up to the time of the recent war. The Committee on School and Education of the Western District Conference for 1898 reports that in the thirty congregations of the Conference at that time forty-two schools had reported with forty-one teachers. The average school period was about two months, though one school reported a term of eight months. Twenty of the teachers also taught the district English term. Wages ranged from \$15 to \$50; thirty-two of the schools used the textbooks recommended by the Conference, while twenty-seven made use of the suggested course of study. The usual branches covered were Bible history, reading, language study, orthography, writing and singing. Several also taught geography, church history, and arithmetic. One had a course in Mennonite history. The Committee in 1917 reported that there were still twelve elementary church schools in the Conference. In many others the demand for German and Bible was met in a measure in the regular district schools.

As suggested above, the seven months' school law seriously affected the German church schools. By this time, too, the younger generation had become thoroughly reconciled to the English language and no longer regarded the German as so absolutely essential to the maintenance of Mennonitism as had the older generation. But it was the war especially, and more particularly the after-war anti-German legislation that all but closed these schools. A number of states passed stringent laws during and even after the war forbidding the teaching of the German lan-

guage in both public and private schools, including both Kansas and Oklahoma. This affected, of course, not only the elementary schools but the preparatory schools as well. For several years the German schools were completely closed. But the Conference decided that religion should be taught in the English language, and the vacation schools be continued, and so most of them have since been revived. With one of the strongest motives for the continuation of these schools removed, however, the teaching of German—it is doubtful whether even these can long be continued. It was questionable in Kansas whether the law of 1919 applied to the church schools held outside of the regular public system, and when in 1923 The American Legion threatened to prosecute several school boards for opening up the German vacation and preparatory schools again, the Western District Conference took up the matter with the state authorities at Topeka with the result that permission was granted by the Attorney-General to continue the German language in these schools. The war, however, and the coming generation "who know not German" gave the special educational system which the Mennonites brought with them from Russia a decided set-back, and the passing of the German elementary school is only a question of time.

Among the organizations which greatly aided the cause of this particular phase of Mennonite education was the "German Teachers' Association" founded in 1886, and confined largely to the Kansas teachers. The purpose of this organization is well-stated in a report made to the Western District Conference in 1895 by Peter Balzer, one of the leading teachers of that time. Balzer says that the Association has been of great benefit to the educational cause, and has especially inspired the German teachers with a zeal for their work that otherwise might not have been possible. It was also responsible for providing a uniform course of study, recommending acceptable textbooks, and the publication of a school songbook called *Der Liederschatz*. In 1894 the Association organized a Teachers' Institute which met each year for several weeks just before the opening of school and in which regular courses of study relating to the work of the German

teacher were pursued. The church conferences, too, always took a lively interest in all the questions that had to do with the education of their children, especially the religious education. The Western District Conference had a Committee on School and Education which made a report each year, and which during all this time played an important role in directing the educational program of the entire body of Mennonites.

PREPARATORY SCHOOLS

The schools mentioned above were those of the elementary system for children under fourteen. The first step toward what might be called higher education among the Mennonites was taken by the Kansas Conference in 1877 when it appointed a committee of the seven leading ministers among them to plan for a *Fortbildungs-Schule* or *Central-Schule* as it was called at other times after similar institutions in Russia, whose chief function would be to train teachers for the elementary system then recommended. Not much was done by this committee for several years except to keep the question alive by annual reports. This was just the time when the Wadsworth institution was in its death throes, and the uncertainty of the educational program of the General Conference may have had something to do with the delay of the Kansas committee. In the meantime, however, Peter Balzer of the Alexanderwohl congregation had started a sort of private teachers training school in his own community which was continued for several years. In 1882 the Conference accepted the offer of the Emmathal congregation in the Alexanderwohl community to the use of their vacant school building for a Conference training school. H. H. Ewert was elected as the first principal of this institution. In the meantime funds had been collected for a permanent building, and the offer of the Halstead church to furnish a building under certain conditions was accepted; the school was then transferred to that town in 1883. Thus was launched what was known as the **Halstead Fortbildungs-Schule**.

The primary purpose of this school was to prepare teachers and to offer others an opportunity to prepare for the duties of

life in an institution that was dominated by a religious atmosphere. The term "Seminary" sometimes applied to it is misleading if used in its modern sense; for training for the ministry was not one of its original functions. Ministers among the Russian Mennonites at that time were not accustomed to receive financial support, nor to prepare specifically for that calling to which they were elected, sometimes by lot. Principal Ewert in his report to the Conference in 1887 assured that body that "the fear that the school would become a sort of preacher factory has not been confirmed so far." The minimum age for admittance was fourteen years and the completion of an elementary course of study an entrance requirement, although it became necessary to take care of some who were not able to meet these conditions. The course of study covered four years, but could not have been extensive; for except for a year or two there were only two teachers, one for the English branches, and one for all the German subjects. Mr. Ewert, the German teacher and principal, remained at the head of the institution until his removal to Manitoba in 1891, to assume a similar role at Gretna. The English position was filled by a different teacher almost every year.

Halstead in a way fell heir to the educational interests of the Mennonite church at large which had been centered at Wadsworth up to 1878. For a time the Missionary committee of the General Conference considered the advisability of co-operating with the Kansas Conference in establishing a missionary training school at Halstead, but nothing came of the attempt. The only material bequest received from Wadsworth was the library of that defunct institution which consisted of ninety-nine books, now the first ninety-nine accessions to the Bethel College library. An interesting educational venture carried on in connection with the main institution was a school for Indian children. The General Conference was conducting an Indian mission in Indian territory at this time, and some of the Indian children from this mission station were brought to Halstead to be educated. Since the United States government paid \$150.00 each year toward the education of every child no additional financial burden was involved. It

was found in a few years, however, that it was impracticable to combine a school for Indian children with one for young men and women. As a result the experiment was discontinued in 1887. The Indians were cared for after that in a private school at the home of Christian Krehbiel until 1896, when the Government closed all Indian contract schools. Krehbiel then turned his large farm buildings into an orphanage for a number of years.

Originally Halstead was not a co-educational institution. The question of opening its doors to young women soon became a live issue, however. In the second year the Kansas Conference permitted the experiment of taking in girl students from the town. Finding that there were no evil results following the admission of the local girls, they opened the doors of the school the next year to all young women on the same terms as to the men. Three out of the seven graduates in the last year of the school's existence, 1893, were women, now the wives of prominent Newton men. For ten years the Halstead institution enjoyed a fairly prosperous existence with an attendance of about fifty as an average. A report in 1886 gives the attendance for that year as fifty-two. Of these nine were girls, and forty-three boys. Twenty-nine were German, nineteen were English, and four Indian. It soon became evident that the school needed better quarters and a more substantial financial support than that which it enjoyed at Halstead if it was to grow as it should. In 1888 the five-year period for which the Conference had contracted with the Halstead church for the building had expired. Since Newton, which in the meantime had become interested in securing the school, had made a more liberal offer than Halstead could afford to make, the Kansas Conference decided to accept the Newton offer on condition that the Conference should be relieved of the responsibility of control by a voluntary educational association. The Bethel College Association was organized, and the corner stone for a fine new building was laid at Newton in 1888. But it was not until five years later that the building was completed and the school transferred to its new home. "Between the laying of the corner stone and the completion of the building in 1893, weeds and sunflowers grew up

around and above the unfinished walls, which fact furnished a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction as well as opportunity for gossip to the enemies of the movement. But Bethel College lives today, and her enemies are passing unhonored."²

Halstead, it will thus be seen, was a "finishing" rather than a preparatory school in the modern sense of that term. The group of so-called preparatory schools now found among the western Mennonites had their origin in the year 1897 when H. D. Penner, then an instructor in Bethel College, feeling the need in the country districts where there were no high schools of something to fill the gap between the elementary schools and the advanced work given at Bethel College, opened up on his own initiative at Hillsboro, Kansas, a private school something after the fashion of the modern Junior high school except that in the new school both German and religion were given chief consideration in the curriculum. Sometime later the institution was taken over by a school association. It was more than a mere school to prepare for higher education, however, and soon had several imitators. That these institutions filled a distinct need in many Mennonite communities is shown by the fact that they flourished in places even where there were good high school facilities.

Within the next fifteen years these schools spread throughout the Russian settlements in the western states and Canada. They went under a variety of names—*Vorbereitungs-Schule*, *Vereins-Schule*, *Fortbildungs-Schule*, and *Bibel-Schule*. But whatever the name, the purpose and the curriculum remained the same. They were meant to furnish an opportunity to the young people of the community in which they were located for a few years of further study of their mother tongue and the Bible, in order that they might not forget their Mennonite heritage. The course of study usually covered two or three short years, and the number of teachers seldom exceeded one or two. Such schools are still found in the communities at Goessel, ^a Hillsboro, Moundridge, Inman and Buhler, Kansas; Beatrice, and Henderson, Ne-

²Dr. J. E. Hartzler, in *Education Among the Mennonites of America*.

^aNow changed to a Community High School.

braska ; and Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The Zoar *Fortbildungs- und Bibel-Schule* conducted by the Krimmer Brethren at Inman stresses especially Bible study. The Bible school at Meno, Oklahoma, is the outgrowth of two earlier preparatory schools. The institutions at Gretna and Altona, Manitoba, and Rosthern, Saskatchewan, serve rather as teacher training schools. Freeman College at Freeman, South Dakota, offers a full academy course with two years of college work. In their original inception, however, these schools all had a common purpose. Some of them have since grown beyond their original plans.

Although it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain these institutions, there is still considerable sentiment among both church and school authorities for their continuation. The report of the educational committee of the Western District Conference in 1923 indicated that at that time in the five Preparatory schools in this Conference district one hundred and eighty students had attended these institutions during the preceding year. And it was the opinion of the Conference that they should be continued, not as a substitute for the high school, but rather as a supplement to furnish the Bible instruction which the high school could not give. Nevertheless, this particular type of institution flourishes best where there is a lack of proper high school facilities. Where these latter are available, especially since English is rapidly replacing German among the young people, the passing of this once popular and useful institution is only a matter of time. The introduction of religious teaching, too, into the public schools will make the special parochial schools less necessary. Among the leaders of this kind of education among the Mennonites during the past thirty years must be mentioned J. J. Balzer of Minnesota; H. D. Penner of Kansas; J. B. Epp of Oklahoma; and H. H. Ewert and David Toews of Canada.

MENNONITE COLLEGES

Bethel

None of the three Mennonite institutions of higher learning began as a full fledged college. All started as preparatory schools

but with collegiate aspirations which some of them ultimately attained. The oldest of these is Bethel at Newton, Kansas, which as we saw was an expansion of the Halstead school. Bethel opened its doors in the fall of 1893 with a student body of sixty on the first day, and a faculty of six, headed by C. H. Wedel, who with G. A. Haury had been transferred from Halstead, and David Goerz who acted as the first business manager. The curriculum which for some years was confined to subjects of academic, and even sub-academic grade expanded as the demands increased. But it was not until 1912 that the first A. B. degrees were granted, and Bethel became a full fledged college; and it was not until 1924 that the college students outnumbered those in the academy. Both languages were in common use, though German was given the preference for a number of years. The whole atmosphere was decidedly German; and it was not until after the recent war that German was relegated to the position of a mere language study. Since then all other subjects in the curriculum as well as most of the social and academic intercourse is carried on in English.

The college was controlled as already indicated by an incorporated association of individuals who each had contributed a minimum of \$100.00 to the cause, being given an extra vote in the management of affairs for each multiple of the minimum. The Association met annually to decide upon school policies and elect a board of directors. Any Mennonite in America was eligible as a member, and funds were at first solicited among the eastern Mennonites as well as among those of Russian extraction in the West. In view of the large contributions made by the churches and of still larger ones hoped for, the Western District Conference as a body was finally granted the liberty by the Association of electing six of the thirteen directors, the other seven being still chosen by the latter organization. Although there is considerable sentiment in favor of complete Conference control, opinions are still divided as to the advisability of this step at this time. The divided responsibility above described thus still obtains. The Conference has always taken a keen interest in every thing that concerns the college. The report of the Bethel *Direktorium* is al-

ways one of the most interesting of the Conference sessions, as well as the best attended; and frequently the most hotly debated issue on the Conference program. Bethel College has exerted a marked influence upon the religious and cultural life of its constituency during the past thirty years. Up to date about 3,500 students have passed through its doors. Perhaps a fourth of these, and about half of all those who graduated since 1912 have entered definite educational or religious work of some sort.

Of the men who laid the foundations, some have already been mentioned—C. H. Wedel, first principal, pioneer Mennonite historian, and according to the universal verdict of all his students, a most inspiring teacher; G. A. Haury, who also came from Halstead, and after more than thirty years of faithful service is still the Nestor of the Bethel faculty³; David Goerz, who as first business manager bore the chief financial burden during the trying years when opposition was strong and money was scarce, and who literally burned out his life in the cause, dying before his time in 1914. To these must be added the names of two other men who helped shoulder the responsibility of making Bethel a possibility from the first—J. J. Krehbiel, president of the board continuously from the beginning to the time of his death in 1907; and B. Warrentin, who served as treasurer of the Board until 1904. Later men who served as presidents for terms more or less brief—J. W. Kliever, J. H. Lagenwaller and J. E. Hartzler all made their contributions to a larger Bethel, but their work would have been impossible without the sacrifices of the pioneers who laid the foundations.

Tabor

The *Brudergemeinde* wing of the Mennonite denomination did not seem to concern itself so seriously with the problem of elementary education as did the group which later formed the Western District Conference. For this there seem to be several reasons. First, there were few members of the Mennonite Brethren contingent among the early immigrants, and such as there

³Professor Haury has since died.

were had been well distributed among the other groups. Their educational problems, therefore, were merged with those of the other branch of the church in practically all of the Mennonite communities. It was not until the coming of Elder Shellenberg in 1878 that definite organization began among them, and definite educational and church policies were formulated. And it was still later before they formed distinct groups of sufficient size to become separate school units. Moreover the Brethren stressed the need of a definite conversion rather than the slower process of education as the right road to church membership. Missions and evangelization, therefore, were given a much more prominent place on their conference programs than education.

After the founding of the school at Halstead, however, and when it became evident that such of their young people as desired an education were finding their way to other schools, and frequently out of the church, such educational leaders as J. F. Harms, J. F. Duerksen, and P. H. Wedel became interested in founding a school of their own. As early as 1885 an association similar to the one at Halstead had been formed to keep alive the school interest; but nothing was done toward establishing a separate institution for several years. In the Conference session of 1892 the Nebraska delegates suggested a *Hochschule* at Henderson. In discussing this question a number of the other delegates favored affiliation with the Baptists in an educational program, since the Mennonite Brethren were not able to support such an institution by themselves. The main reason for suggesting such an affiliation rather than a united effort with the Western District Conference was due to the fact that the Brethren were strong immersionists, and refused to co-operate in an educational or religious program except with those who held views similar to theirs on this question. The bitterness engendered between the two groups by their rivalry in Russia also no doubt contributed greatly to this result.

The first definite steps taken by the Mennonite Brethren toward a solution of their school problem was the acceptance by their school association in 1898 of the invitation tendered them by the directors of McPherson College, a Dunkard and therefore im-

mersionist institution, to furnish a German teacher for that college who should have special charge of such Mennonite students as might wish to attend either his or other departments. The next year the Conference approved this arrangement, and appointed J. F. Duerksen to this position with a salary of \$400.00 which was to be collected by voluntary contributions. This arrangement lasted for seven years and seemed fairly successful. In 1904 there were twenty-five students in the German department, many of whom also took work in other subjects. At best, however, this could be only a temporary solution, and it was no surprise when the Conference ended the agreement in 1905 with an attempt to collect the German teacher's back pay which amounted to something over \$400.00.

No further action was taken toward founding a school until 1908 when another association similar to the one at Bethel was formed. This association, securing the co-operation of the Krimmer Brethren who are also immersionists, established a college at Hillsboro, not far from Newton, which they called Tabor. The institution opened in the fall of that year with three teachers, and a student body on the opening day of thirty-nine. In 1923 there was a faculty of fifteen with a student body distributed through the following departments.: College, 60; Academy, 166; Bible, 74; Art, 29; Piano, 93; Voice, 36; Business, 73; Violin, 20. Many of these, of course, are duplicates. The variety of courses offered here is evidence that Tabor attempts to meet all the educational demands of its constituency as to subject matter; but it is not strong enough to do alone what could be done much more effectually by the co-operative effort of all the different groups of western Mennonites. Among the pioneer educators at Tabor are H. W. Lohrenz, president since 1908; P. C. Hiebert, vice-president; and D. E. Harder, secretary, who represents the Krimmer Brethren.

Freeman

Freeman College is a small school supported by an association from the large congregations about Freeman, South Dakota. It was founded in 1903, and like the other Mennonite colleges had

a modest beginning but a rather ambitious program. The two teachers with which it opened its doors the first day have since grown to eight; and the curriculum has expanded from a German Bible and elementary school to a Junior college. The Bulletin of 1918 contains the following interesting analysis of the local student body at that time: "Up to the present time we have 103 regular students and 23 special students enrolled. Of this number 43 are boys and 83 are girls. Among the regular students there are 49 Freshmen, 31 Sophomores, 10 Juniors, and 10 Seniors. There are 85 Mennonites, 14 Lutherans, 3 Evangelicals, and 1 Reformed. Of the Mennonite churches the following three have the greatest representation—Salem, 35; Salem Zion, 17; Avon, 7. There are 71 Schweitzer, 17 Huterisch, and 17 Low German among the Mennonites." Freeman, it will be seen, is still largely a local institution.

CANADA

In Manitoba Mennonite education had a history all its own. The Order in Council of 1873, it will be remembered, guaranteed the Mennonites among other privileges complete control over their schools. Making free use of these liberal concessions, they immediately organized their school system on the basis of their experience in Russia. Like their brethren on this side of the boundary line they regarded education as the special function of the church. The purpose of the school was to prepare the child for church membership, and the simple duties of farm life. Beyond that it had no excuse for being. The curriculum selected with this end in view consisted of reading and writing, with Bible study, the catechism, singing, and perhaps a little arithmetic, though no more of the latter than was necessary to enable the child to perform the simplest computations of farm mathematics—all this of course in the German language.

In course of time each village built its own schoolhouse, though at first the pupils met in private homes. School furniture and equipment was of the most primitive kind. All the desks were home made, and seats were without backs. There might be a black-board; but no maps and globes, and few text books. Some

of the teachers were fairly well equipped for their simple tasks, having been trained for their work in Russia. But the profession degenerated rapidly with the coming of the second generation of teachers who had no preparation beyond what they received in their own elementary schools. All were Mennonites, and none had a government license for teaching; and what was worse few had the necessary qualifications for securing one. The schools were supported partly by tuition, and partly by contribution levied upon the farm property of the villagers. The meager salary of the teacher consisted partly of money, but largely of wheat and barley. The teacher was always of the male species, usually married, and living in one end of the school building, or perhaps in a special "teacherage." In order to provide for his large family it was necessary to add to his winter's income from teaching some summer occupation—frequently that of village herdsman. There was no school supervision or inspection whatsoever except such as the church elders chose to exercise by virtue of their dominant position in the social order. Of government control there was none at all.

This system prevailed throughout the Mennonite communities of Manitoba without much sign of improvement for about fifteen years. In the meantime Provincial school authorities urged the organization of public school districts with improved methods of work. Since the creation of these districts was optional, however, little progress was made in this direction. An English school inspector, a former military officer, and thoroughly out of sympathy with the ideals of the Mennonites further retarded the cause of public schools. Finally upon the suggestion of and with the co-operation of some of the more progressive Mennonites in the eastern end of the Western Reserve the Provincial government appointed a Mennonite, H. H. Ewert, at that time principal of the school at Halstead, as inspector of Mennonite schools in Manitoba, with the task of increasing the number of public schools throughout the two Reserves. At the same time this small group of Mennonites in the interests of the educational progress of their people, organized a school association for the purpose of support-

ing a teachers' training school at Gretna, with Mr. Ewert as principal. This was in 1891.

Mr. Ewert held this supervising position for twelve years, and during that time there was a continued growth in the number of districts organized. When he assumed office there were just eight districts out of the entire number of one hundred and fifty schools within the two Mennonite Reserves. All the others were still conducted as church enterprises exclusively under the control of the church, and in the German language. Not only did the number of public schools increase during his incumbency, but the use of the English language, a more comprehensive curriculum, and improved methods of instruction as well. A report made by the inspector in 1895 indicates that by that time there were twenty-one public schools, and that several new up-to-date buildings had been erected. Seven were equipped with "patent" desks, while the rest still used home made furniture. Many of the teachers had pursued courses at Gretna, although only two had government licenses.

A serious handicap to the educational progress of the Mennonites, according to the above report, were the low wages and poor preparation of the teachers. In the Eastern Reserve as well as among the Old Colonists of the Western Reserve government support was persistently refused because of the fear that the acceptance of such support would lead to government control. Mr. Ewert suggested that the Education department of the Province print the school laws in the German language so that they might be available to the German speaking people. Much of the opposition to the public school system he thought was due to a misunderstanding of the laws. Not one in a hundred of the Mennonites, he said, was able to read the English school laws intelligently.

By 1903 the organized district schools had grown to forty-one, nearly one-third of the entire number. The teachers who held government licenses had increased to sixteen. While German was still used as the medium of instruction in the lower grades, English had become the prevailing language in the upper grades. In the

railroad villages along the Canadian Pacific, west of the Red river, and in Steinbach to the east, there were a number of two and three room schools, and the courses of study fairly satisfactory. But in the rural districts somewhat removed from the civilizing influences of the railroads, Ewert's report for the above year indicated that there were no classes "adapted to, nor time for the study of geography or history; and very little is done in drawing and composition. Writing and singing receive a fair amount of attention. Most progress has been made in arithmetic."

Unfortunately Mr. Ewert's aggressive efforts in the interest of educational reform aroused the antagonism of the conservatives, who saw no need for improving the school system which had been good enough in Russia. Capitalizing this opposition at a time when it ran high in 1903, one of the local political parties, hoping to poll a large vote among Mr. Ewert's opponents, secured his dismissal from the post of inspector. These short-sighted politicians did not reckon with the fact, however, that the conservatives who would not support the public school system would not take any part in political affairs either. The only result of their interference was the dismissal of an efficient public servant, and irreparable damage to the cause of educational progress among the Mennonites.

After this, there was a decrease in the number of public schools among the Mennonites of Manitoba, a number reverting back again to private institutions. By 1916 less than one-third were under government supervision in Manitoba; while in Saskatchewan the number of such schools equalled about two-thirds of the entire number among the Mennonites of that Province. By this time the entire number of schools among the Canadian Mennonites of Russian descent had reached about two hundred, nearly equally divided between the two Provinces mentioned. Among the groups that favored the public school during this period were the General Conference Mennonites, the so-called Holdemanites, and the Bruedergemeinde. Opposed were the Sommerfielders, who did not discipline such parents, however, as permitted their children to attend. But the Kleingemeinders, and the Old Colonists,

or Rheinlanders, as they are sometimes called, were bitter-enders both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; they refused persistently not only to establish public schools in their midst, but disciplined parents who permitted their children to attend them.

Up to the time mentioned above there was little interference by the governments of either Province in the local management of Mennonite education. German was allowed a conspicuous place in all the schools, while in some of the private institutions it was the only language used. Public schools, where adopted, had to comply with certain established standards, but such schools were nowhere made obligatory. The late war, however, brought about a radical change in the liberal educational policy which the western Provinces had followed up to this time relative to all their foreign populations, whether German, French or Slavic. In both Manitoba and Saskatchewan laws were passed forbidding the use of any other language than English in either public or private schools. These laws with their drastic elimination of German as a means of instruction among the Mennonites who for fifty years had known hardly any other tongue in their religious worship and social intercourse, spread consternation among them and called forth a determined opposition not only from the conservatives but also from the progressives who had been most favorable to the extension of the public school system. Some of these latter now favored changing their schools back to private control again under the belief that the law would not be so strictly enforced in the private as in the public system. For several years the governments followed a watchful waiting policy, and the law was not rigorously enforced. Among the progressive groups who had already adopted the English language as the principal medium of instruction, the German was still retained as a subject for an hour or more each day. So long as the schools measured up to the required standards of instruction, and the English was well taught, the inspectors did not inquire too closely into the small amount of German that was still retained. The Old Colonists, too, were allowed a breathing spell to adapt themselves to the new conditions and make up their minds as to their future course.

But the coming of the Huterites from the Dakotas into Canada in 1918 brought matters to a head. These Huterites, as seen elsewhere, had migrated from South Dakota as a result of harsh treatment during the war at the hands of local Councils of Defense. Although not usually known as Mennonites, they now emphasized their Mennonite affiliation in order to share with the latter in Canada the exemptions the latter enjoyed there. The immigration of more Mennonites just at this time when feeling was already running strong against them because of their special privileges and German extraction, brought to the surface all the latent opposition to their privileged status which had been gathering force all through the war. Largely through the organized influence of ex-service men, and the public press drastic measures were passed by the Dominion Government forbidding further Mennonite immigration into Canada, and by the Provincial school authorities to enforce the laws forbidding the use of German in the schools. Most of the groups, after several years of petitioning to the Legislatures and vain appealing to the courts, finally bowed to the inevitable, and conformed to the Provincial laws. The Old Colonists, however, in both the Provinces, to whom the German school seemed an integral part of their religious system, preferred persecution to what they believed would seriously threaten the maintenance of their religious faith, and to what they interpreted as an infringement of their religious liberty as well as a violation of the promises of 1873.

They stubbornly resisted all the efforts of the school authorities to establish public schools, and to compel their children to attend them. In Saskatchewan the government finally erected public buildings, or confiscated private ones, and levied taxes among the unwilling patrons to pay for them; appointed outside trustees over these schools; sent in outside English teachers; and then awaited results. Nothing happened. Few children came. Then to enforce attendance the government fined and jailed the parents. A news item from Hague appearing in the *Steinbach Post* on March 31, 1921 stating that a short time before sixty Mennonites had paid a fine of \$1,000.00, and that one had just been given a

thirty-day jail sentence in Prince Albert is a typical illustration of what was going on.

In Manitoba, too, similar measures were adopted, though they were not so drastically enforced. Public schools with exclusive English instruction were every where established under the control of government trustees. The Old Colonists refused to send their children; and a number of individual parents among other groups did so under compulsion. English teachers hired by trustees for the schools drew a year's salary without teaching a single day. Parents were fined. But none of these measures succeeded in gaining the desired end. The Old Colonists could not become reconciled to the loss of their school privileges. Nothing seemed left now for them but another trek to a new land of freedom where the need of new settlers and the absence of anti-German feeling might guarantee them the liberties which they had enjoyed in Canada since 1873. As early as 1919 there was talk of leaving Canada. During the next two years delegations were sent to various South American countries, Mexico, and several of our own southern states. Strange as it may seem they were every where promised their demands, even in Mississippi and Florida—religious liberty, complete control over their schools with permission to use the language of their choice. They finally selected Mexico; and in 1922 began an emigration which up to date has resulted in the loss to Canada of some five or six thousand Old Colonists, among her very best farmers.

To an American to whom the public school conducted in the language of the country is taken for granted, and who is unacquainted with the Mennonite situation in Canada, this school controversy may seem a one-sided affair with little to be said in favor of the Old Colonists. The government not only has a legal right, one is inclined to say, but is morally bound to enforce a uniform language in its public schools for the common good. But in justice to these Mennonites with a tender conscience, though with perhaps a narrow outlook and mistaken convictions, one needs at least to get their point of view before condemning their attitude, or approving the government policy which drove them out of the

country. As already indicated, to these Mennonites their schools and their mother tongue seemed, whether rightly or not, a very essential part of their religious system. The two were so closely linked up together that the one could not be perpetuated among their children without the other. It was for the future that they were concerned. This conviction had been one of their treasured traditions for centuries.

Unfortunately the governments were forced to the use of unnecessarily harsh measures because of the anti-German feeling engendered by the war. A little tact and patience would have solved the question in time without any serious consequences to either side. While at first the Old Colonists were opposed to the use of any English in their schools, yet in the end they had become reconciled to that language if only enough time could have been granted on the school program for German to assure them that their children would not forget their mother tongue. But the authorities forbade all use of German. Then, too, the arbitrary building of school houses, the outside control of the whole school system by absentee trustees, and the sending in of foreign teachers—all of this without the consent and against the unanimous protest of all the taxpayers of the community, convinced the Mennonites that it was the settled purpose of the Government to take the control of their schools entirely out of their hands. This policy was certainly an unwise one.

Narrow minded, undoubtedly the Old Colonists were, and mistaken in their contention that the kernel of Mennonitism can be preserved only in a German shell. Nevertheless they were pious, honest and sincere. In all Canada there was not a more industrious and law abiding people than they, nor with a firmer conviction to do the right as they saw it. Their going was a distinct loss to the moral as well as economic development of the western Provinces; and could have been prevented by a wiser administration of affairs on the part of the school authorities.

The emigration just mentioned, of course, was confined to the Old Colonists, who formed but a minor portion of the entire

Mennonite population of Canada ⁴. A few words should be said about the educational interests of those who remained. The Gretna Normal School did not cease to function with the dismissal of Mr. Ewert as inspector in 1903. On the contrary it continued to prepare teachers for an increasing number of Mennonite schools throughout all the settlements. Originally a training school for teachers, it has since developed into a high grade preparatory school fully accredited by the Manitoba government for such work as it offers. Unfortunately the institution has not been without its serious struggles. Even the progressives could not always agree on educational policies. Some years ago as a result of a local misunderstanding a rival school was started in the neighboring town of Altona. And so, for a few years, two institutions tried to administer to the educational needs of a field that was hardly large enough for one. Both schools led a precarious existence. Finally Altona suspended operations; and after the war Gretna was rapidly heading in the same direction when the coming of a large number of new Russian immigrants, more eager for schooling than the older Canadian Russians ever were, saved the institution. The school now has a larger attendance than it has had for years, but mostly of recent immigrants who unlike their Old Colonist brethren, are eager to learn English. Like most Mennonite schools Gretna has been supported by a School Association.

Several years ago a movement was started among different groups of Mennonites, some of whom had never been actively supporting the cause of education before, for a union school in Manitoba more directly under the control of the church organization. The movement failed to materialize, however, as originally planned, largely because the more conservative Sommerfelders, one of the interested parties, insisted among other conditions that the proposed school must remain merely a training

⁴There is considerable sentiment for emigration among the Sommerfelders also, and a few went to Mexico. Since the above was written a small group has emigrated to Paraguay, South America, and others are preparing to follow.

school for teachers in the elementary system. Consequently only such were to be admitted who promised to take up the work of teaching. Girls and literary societies, too, should be excluded. The Gretna constituency could not accept these conditions. The Sommerfelders then took over the Altona school, and are now maintaining it alone as a rival institution; but whether the above mentioned twin evils are still under the ban the author does not know.

A word should be said here about the outstanding leader among the educational forces of the Manitoba Mennonites, H. H. Ewert. For twelve years as inspector of schools, and now for thirty-five years as principal of the Gretna Training School he has been the backbone of the whole movement among the Manitoba Mennonites for better schools. At the cost of great personal sacrifice, and against innumerable discouragements he has fought against ignorance and conservatism which for many years nullified all his best efforts in the attempt to maintain higher standards of education among his people. It would seem that now, however, with the coming of new blood from Europe the permanency of his pioneer work may be assured. The substitution of some fifteen thousand progressive Mennonites from Russia, all eager to fit into the ways of the new world as rapidly as possible, for the five or six thousand conservative Old Colonists who have gone to Mexico will no doubt prove a great boon to all the Canadian Mennonite schools.

In Saskatchewan David Toews has accomplished through the Rosthern German-English academy for the Mennonites of Saskatchewan and Alberta what Ewert has done for Manitoba.

PLATTDEUTSCH

It may not be out of place to close this chapter with a brief reference to the every day language in use among the majority of the Russian Mennonites—the "Plattdeutsch". This dialect, with a number of variations, as its name indicates, was the prevailing speech in daily use in the low-lands all along the Baltic coast across northern Germany, and was brought into southern Russia

by the Prussian immigrants in the early nineteenth century. With the exception of the Swiss groups—a very small part of the entire contingent of Russian Mennonites—the immigrants to Kansas and Manitoba clung to their inherited dialect, and taught it to their children and children's children.

For the following brief observations regarding the language I am indebted to Professor C. C. Janzen, of the University of Maine, who says:

The Plattdeutsch is a soft, open vowelled dialect. A large proportion of the words of two or more syllables end in a vowel. This is especially true of verbs and plural nouns. To express the possessives most nouns must be followed by their possessive pronoun of the same gender. Only a few nouns express the possessive by the adding of an "s." Three genders are distinguished. In the singular nominative masculine and feminine gender use the same definite article. Nouns may be said to be declined without change of form, except the change from the singular to the plural. Verbs are conjugated somewhat like German verbs. The sentence structure is very similar to that of the German.

In America the Russian Mennonites soon dropped the Russian language (what little they knew of it) and began to learn the English in its stead. That made them again trilingual. So long as the school laws permitted a relatively long term of German school the children usually acquired a poor German, and a very bad dialectal English. Their writing in either language was beset with great difficulties and many mistakes. With the lengthening of the English term the German has been almost crushed out, and the Plattdeutsch is slowly going the same way. Some Sunday school classes are now conducted in English since the children can not read German or understand it when it is spoken to them.

The Russian Mennonites used to teach their children various nursery rhymes and ditties. I remember two especially which my mother taught me long before we went to the District school two miles away:

*Schokel, schokel, scheia,
Ostri et wi Eia,
Pingsti et wi wittet Brot,*

*Staw wi nich dann woa wi groat,
Staw wi doch dann kom wi ennt loch⁵.*

Also:

*Othoa langnes sett op sine greeni Wes,
Haft rodi Stewilkes aun,
Sitt aus een Adelman.*

*Wannea woat he wadda komi?
Opt Joa, opt Joa,*

*Wann di Roggi ripi
Wan di Poggi pipi,
Wann di Kalwa blori,
Enn di Deri knori,*

Pip Mus, Othoa es tus⁶.

Professor Janzen, himself no mean poet, has contributed the following poem in the dialect as it is spoken today in the region about Hillsboro, Kansas, which incidentally expresses the attitude of the typical Russian Mennonites of that community in the days gone by on the question of higher education for women:

LISKI GEIT NO KALLITSCH

*Es dat doch ni groti Trua,
Senn mau blos een oma Bua;
Gelt enn Got deit emma fehle,
Mott so rackri enn mi quaele,
Oba Liski geit no Kallitsch.*

⁵.Free translation,

Rockabye, rockabye, bye
Easter we eat eggs,
Pentecost we eat white bread;
If we die not then we grow large,
But if we die we are put into the hole.

⁶.Mr. Stork long nose sits upon his green meadow,
Has on red bootlets,
Looks like a nobleman.

When will he come again?
When the rye becomes ripe,
When the frogs pipe,
When the calves bawl,
When the doors creak;
Pipe mouse, the stork is here.

*Alle lewi Winta morgi
Schaufst de Fru met Angst enn Sorge,
Deit sick noch dobi so graeme,
Dat sick Liski woll full schaeme,
Oba Liski geit no Kallitsch.*

*Es noch green enn unneaforti,
Wat well dat noch mett ea wori;
Kann nich koki oda backi,
Well blos pienig Weisheit schnacki,
Oba Liski geit no Kallitsch.*

*Mach nich waschi oda neie,
Mach mi blos dat Gelt veseie;
Kaft sick alli basti Kleda,
Singt dann Tus de dommi Leda
De see leat em Kallitsch.*

*Deit mien Fru noch knetti, haekli,
Kann sec dat blos scheen bimaekli;
Mach sick allis emma kepi,
Enn dat Hemd vom Lief mi strepi;
Oba Liski geit no Kallitsch.*

*Een Piano sal noch senne,
Fracht nich, auf eck uck woa kenne;
Wiel di Mutta sick deit quaele,
Well see setti enn blos spelle
Wat see leat em Kallitsch.*

*Wann see noch een Mann sull krie,
Enn de ea uck woll frie;
Wo woat dat ma alla goni,
Wann see enn dem Hus nuscht deit vestohni,
Wiel see ging nom Kallitsch.*

*Es dat doch ni groti Trua,
Senn ma blos een oma Bua;
Gelt enn Got deit emma fehle,
Mott so rackri enn mi quaele,
Oba Liski geit no Kallitsch.*

XII.

THE ORGANIZED CHURCH

Mennonites, being strongly individualistic, have always been prone to branch out into innumerable divisions. The Russian Mennonites were no exception to this rule. The immigrants of 1874 represented four well defined groups at that time—(1) the main body of the church, sometimes called *Kirchliche Mennoniten* by the smaller groups in Russia, but in this chapter known as General Conference Mennonites, because they affiliated themselves in course of time with that body in America; (2) the *Brueder-Gemeinde* or Mennonite Brethren; (3) *Krimmer Brueder*; and (4) the *Kleine Gemeinde*. To these must be added several others of strictly American origin, such as the *Holdemanites*, and the followers of Isaac Peters of Nebraska, and Aaron Wall of Minnesota. There are several groups also which, although they did not form separate branches of the church in Russia, yet they formed independent ecclesiastical units; and continuing their compact settlements in America without affiliating with any other group they may well be regarded as independent branches of the church at large. Among these are to be numbered the Sommerfelders, Bergthalers, and Old Colonists, all of Canada. In all of the fundamental and characteristic tenets of historical Mennonitism these all agree. Such differences as keep them apart are small and insignificant, sometimes merely geographical, social or temperamental. Form of baptism may seem more serious, but even that ought not be an insurmountable difference. It shall be the purpose of this chapter to briefly describe these divisions in their chronological order. By far the largest and most important group is the one which we shall call here the

General Conference Mennonites

The term *Kirchliche* or *Altkirchliche* which literally translated means "churchly" is a name coined by the Mennonite Breth-

ren and applied to the main body of Mennonites in Russia to distinguish the latter from the smaller groups that have severed their connection with the parent body. The name is not in common use in America. This is by far the largest group of the immigrants of 1874. Although they came from widely scattered communities in Russia, and in many cases from more or less isolated self governing ecclesiastical units, yet in America they formed themselves into a common Conference. As early as 1877, it will be remembered, ten of the Kansas congregations organized what became known for some years as the Kansas Conference. The most important common task which claimed the attention of these meetings for some years was education; but later missionary effort, publication questions, and evangelism were given a prominent part on the conference programs. Before 1890 the Prussian congregation at Beatrice, Nebraska, also joined this group at which time the name was enlarged to the Western District Conference. Daughter congregations in Oklahoma and other western states have since also come into the same organization. Soon after the congregations in Dakota and Minnesota organized the Northern District Conference. In more recent years the Pacific Coast Conference has also come into existence. These three conferences now embrace about seventy congregations, including several smaller Prussian, Galician and Swiss groups.

At the time of the immigration, there were several well defined divisions within the American Mennonite church; the principal ones being the General Conference which had been organized only a short time before, and the main body which here shall be known as the Old Mennonites. Both of these groups had aided the Russian immigrants liberally, both with money and other service; and both gave the new arrivals a hearty invitation to affiliate with themselves ecclesiastically. The Old Mennonites, however, because of their strict dress regulations, their conservative customs, and suspicion of everything new in religious worship and social practice, were more hesitant than the General Conference to assimilate a group that differed from themselves in some of these respects. The Russians themselves give as their reason

for preferring the latter to the former the fact that the General Conference were more interested at this particular time than were the Old Mennonites in missionary work, a work in which the Russians were also greatly concerned. The fact that most of the churches of the Western District Conference were also of more recent German origin than the older American Mennonite stock had its weight. And so in course of time nearly all the congregations which in Russia may be said to affiliate with the main body here joined the General Conference movement; only a few later cast their lot with the Old Mennonites, but even these retained this connection for but a short time. These latter finally organized a conference of their own.

In church government this Conference is congregational, each congregation being a self governing unit, determining its own church policy. The different congregations therefore joined the Conference as individuals and at different times. The first ones to do so were Alexanderwohl in 1876, represented by H. Richert and D. Goerz, followed by Hoffnungsau and Bruderthal, which were represented at the Wadsworth meeting in 1878 by Elders Dietrich Gaeddert, and William Ewert respectively. At the next Conference held at Halstead in 1881 the Swiss from Dakota made their first appearance, together with five more congregations from Kansas. Minnesota was represented first in 1890, and Nebraska in 1893. At the Beatrice meeting in 1896 delegates were present from twenty congregations in Kansas; and two each from South Dakota, Minnesota, and Nebraska. After that each succeeding Conference session included delegates from an ever widening circle of congregations until at present the Russian contingent numbers about seventy in the United States and seven in Saskatchewan.

Congregationalism is the only form of church government, it will be observed, which makes possible a united effort on the part of an ecclesiastical body in the direction of common educational, mission and publication enterprises, while at the same time permitting a certain latitude to each congregation in determining its own particular form of worship. The General Conference group

is the only branch of the Mennonite church that has been able to unite different groups of Mennonites in a common program of church extension, without at the same time destroying that local autonomy and respect for the individual conscience which has been so characteristic of historic Mennonitism from its beginning. Conference sessions are held not for the purpose of laying down rules as to how the members should eat or drink or what kind of clothes they should wear, but rather to discuss the best methods of carrying on the constructive work of the church. The other matters are left to each congregation. And on these points local groups can disagree without interfering with their more important common efforts. Customs are not all alike. Some are of Swiss origin, others of Prussian. Some pay their ministers, others do not. The Swiss, and several other groups practice footwashing in connection with the communion service; most of the congregations never knew the practice, while by still others it has been discarded. In Alexanderwohl it is optional. Most of them practice baptism by affusion. A few permit either form. Practically none prescribe the exact form definitely. Most of the Russian congregations in the General Conference are opposed to secret societies. In recent years there has been a little friction between the East and West in this matter, though it is not at all likely to end in serious difficulty. The first generation of preachers were all unsalaried. A few of the older men who began their career under the old system wish to continue it to the end; but beyond these few a salaried ministry is rapidly becoming general. None of these differences, however, prevents any of them from supporting Bethel College, or the mission stations in India, China and among our American Indians.

This group is not only the largest and most progressive of all the Russian Mennonites, but the most thoroughly Americanized as well. Although some of the original immigrants were slow in taking out their naturalization papers under the mistaken notion that it would be more difficult to maintain their non-resistant attitude as citizens than as aliens, the majority of them in course of time assumed all the duties and privileges of citizenship. Many of

them held positions of trust in their communities and states. Some of them have served in state legislatures; others in county offices; one of them entered the national political arena, and during McKinley's administration was given a responsible position on a foreign mission. In the educational field especially they have made themselves felt. Large numbers of the descendants of the first settlers have entered the public schools, where as teachers, school and county superintendents they have almost without exception made their influence felt in the right direction. Many are found on the faculties of western universities and colleges. One became a Rhodes' scholar, and is now an Oxford don. The present rising generation coming up through the public schools is as thoroughly American as are the descendants of the Mayflower passengers.

Kleine Gemeinde

The Kleine Gemeinde was the first group to separate from the main body in Russia. The division was the result of a controversy over a question of church discipline, especially whether the Mennonite *Schultz* and *Gebietsamt* should exercise the local police powers against fellow Mennonites which were necessary to maintain local order. Church and State, it will be remembered, were dangerously close to each other in matters of local government among the Mennonites of Russia. This issue was brought to a head in 1820 by a minister in the Molotschna settlement, Klaas Reimer, an ambitious, selfwilled, and supercritical, though no doubt sincere man, who answered this question in the negative, and who at the same time favored a more rigid discipline in matters of religion by means of the ban than was being practiced by the church at large.

Reimer stirred up so much dissension through his preaching that Jacob Enns, the Molotschna elder, requested the local *Gebietsamt* to silence him, a power no doubt within their jurisdiction. Reimer then appealed to the Chortitz elder for intervention in his behalf. This elder, however, Johan Wiebe by name, also threatened the disturber with Siberia in case he should set up a distinct ecclesiastical organization apart from the Mennonite body

already in existence. This only made matters worse, until Reimer with eighteen others in spite of the threats of the elders, seceding from the church organized one of their own. Although the Mennonite elders put forth strong efforts to prevent it, the new party secured recognition from the government as a separate ecclesiastical body with all the rights and privileges originally granted to the Mennonites. Other similar groups seceded at the same time throughout the different settlements. These united with one another and thus was formed what is known as the *Kleine Gemeinde*.

A pamphlet published at Ohrloff by a member of the sect in 1838 in defense of Reimer's withdrawal answers his critics under five heads. First—it is entirely contrary to the teaching of the Saviour, and contrary to the non-resistant faith to turn a brother over to the temporal authorities for punishment for alleged misconduct. As this practice grew among the Molotschnaites, so says the writer of this pamphlet, spiritual discipline grew more lax, and drinking, quarreling and other vices increased. The ban was sparingly enforced against such. Second—in reply to the charge that the new party exercised too strict a church discipline for minor ecclesiastical offenses, the accusers are referred to the sixteen punishable faults recorded in II Timothy 3:1-5. They punish only such wrong-doing as the Word of God commands. Third—as to the charge of disloyalty to the government “although we do not resist evil, yet we recognize a government as divinely ordained. We have never refused to be obedient to the government, but in such matters as arresting bad people, arresting them to transport them, or to accuse some one before the government, or to help to punish with money or corporal punishment, all such Jesus gave us no example for, but turned such over to the worldly government. We are not with those who would overthrow the government, for we know that it is ordained of God.” Fourth—the reason for warning their people against attendance at weddings as then conducted was due to the fact that the “ancient example of young Tobias was no longer followed on these occasions; but instead there is lust of the eye and of the flesh, and a

high and proud spirit which is not from the Father, but from the world. Although there is no direct word in the Scriptures forbidding attendance at weddings, yet it is said that we are to have no fellowship with the world. You know yourselves how the poor blind people act at these wedding feasts, the one proud, the other still prouder the pipe in one hand, and the songbook in the other as if the living God, and the dying Lord Jesus could be honored thereby. Warning against such practices can be found in the George Hansen's confession of faith, and also in that of Hans van Steen." Fifth—they do not approve of sermons and eulogies of the dead at funeral services, a practice which formerly was common only among Catholics and Lutherans. But recently these have been introduced among the Mennonites, the writer says, and now "are thoroughly entrenched among them." "Even though the life of the departed may have been evil, in order to assure the relatives of the blessedness of their loved one, the life of the deceased is highly eulogized at the grave."

On the main issue in this controversy, namely the use of force by the Mennonites against fellow Mennonites to bring about compliance with local temporal regulations, Reimer undoubtedly was right in his contention that this was inconsistent with the historic faith and practice of Mennonitism. Never before had the Mennonites been entrusted with the task of maintaining civil order in the local community through the exercise of the police power. It was a new experience for them; and they could not always square their practice with their nonresistant theory when the local magistrate found it necessary to lead a fellow Mennonite to the whipping post, or lock him up in the local jail. There was plenty of need of reform, too, no doubt of the spiritual and social life in most of the churches. But according to Reimer himself the movement he inaugurated often broke beyond the bounds of moderation, and resulted occasionally in outbreaks of fanaticism and excessive emotionalism that was not much of an improvement over the conditions which it sought to remedy. Reimer himself, however, seems to have kept his head. Nevertheless, his small church never grew to large dimensions. By the time of the emigration it

had nearly run its course. What was left of it came to America.

A company of Kleingemeinders, it will be remembered, was the first Mennonite group to arrive in Manitoba in 1874. They located in what was known as the Eastern Reserve, but a number of them dissatisfied with the wet lands of that region located on the west side of the Red river in what was then called the Scratching River settlement near the present town of Morris. In the same year another group of the same party never reached Manitoba, but leaving their fellow immigrants at Buffalo, they found their way to what is now Jansen, Nebraska. The total number in both settlements during the first year was perhaps not over five hundred souls all told. To these were added additional settlers in 1877. The congregation at Jansen has since been abandoned, most of them some fifteen years ago having gone to Meade county, Kansas; others left for California. In Manitoba the Holdemanites have made some inroads upon their membership and there are only two congregations still of the original faith with a membership of a little over four hundred. The Kleine Gemeinde church is still quite conservative in all church beliefs and practices, and has not changed much since its origin.

Krimmer Brethren

Seclusive as the Kleine Gemeinde group was, however, and strictly as the leaders tried to hew to the literal demands of the New Testament teaching, they evidently still included too much of the "world" to satisfy their most critical members. A few sensitive souls among their number in the Crimea, not finding the satisfaction of soul which their ardent spirits craved in the church of which they were members, "convinced of their lost condition, and full of soul anguish, and fear of hell fire," formed themselves into a new organization in 1869 under the leadership of one of their number, Elder J. A. Wiebe. This was the beginning of what later became known as the Krimmer Brethren Mennonite Church.

In their religious practices this new group displayed a rather unexpected mixture of conservative and liberal elements. All the new members were required to submit to rebaptism by immersion

as a condition of membership, on the ground that their first baptism evidently not being based on "true conversion" was not valid. The old conservative confession of faith drawn up at Dortrecht in 1632 was adopted as their accepted standard of faith. Feet-washing, a strict interpretation of the ban, and other conservative practices soon gained acceptance. On the other hand such progressive measures as Sunday schools, and evangelistic meetings which the followers of the antiquated confession of faith in question usually were slow to accept, the Krimmer Brethren ardently espoused from the start.

This group, consisting of thirty-five families by 1874, it will be remembered emigrated enmasse to Kansas in the summer of that year where they established the village of Gnadenau. Here they displayed the same religious zeal which characterized their spiritual life in the Crimea. Much of their unoccupied time was devoted to the culture of their religious natures. On Sundays, meetings were held morning, noon and night in their meeting-house, while during the week prayer meetings were conducted in their rude prairie homes. Revivals were frequent, and widely attended. Church attendance was usually one hundred per cent. At the same time a strict discipline was maintained. The sale of both tobacco and liquor were prohibited in the village. Dancing and other youthful frivolities, not always successfully suppressed in other Mennonite communities, were strictly tabooed. Young people were carefully chaperoned by their elders. For many years the weekly choir rehearsal was attended by some reliable adult man not only to sing but to assure the proper decorum among the young people. Sunday schools were held in the afternoon so as to minimize the opportunities for desecrating the Sabbath day.

Fashionable dress and other worldly vanities were rigidly excluded from their lives; for many years women were not permitted to wear hats; but on the other hand aprons, relics of an early day, were prescribed. New fads and styles of all sorts as they appeared in the community were in turn tabooed. Thus, in course of time the following were all outlawed in their turn, most of them only temporarily to be sure—ties, detachable collars, photo-

graphs, bicycles, buggy riding on Sundays, musical instruments, etc. As late as 1905 their annual conference still concerned itself with rules regulating the daily conduct of their members. Marriage with others than those of their own faith or that of the Mennonite Brethren was punishable by excommunication. Aping after the follies of the world in superfluous dress, excessive buying of land, attending theatres and circuses were all proven as sinful by copious Scripture quotations. In later conferences regulations were passed against hail and life insurance, taking part in elections except for school purposes, jury service, and the carrying of guns. Preachers were selected from the laity, and served without pay.

The Krimmer Brethren differ very little from the older Mennonite Brethren in their religious beliefs. Both are immersionists; both are highly evangelistic; and both stress the emotional side of religious experience and practice. For a time during the early years in Kansas it seemed as though the two might unite their forces. In 1875 and in the years immediately following, a large colony of recent converts to the Mennonite Brethren church in the Volga region, located near Gnadenau under the leadership of Peter Eckert, and formed what is now known as the Ebenfeld congregation. This being the first organized body of the Mennonite Brethren to locate in Kansas, it seemed to both Eckert and Wiebe that, inasmuch as their beliefs and practices were so similar, there was no good reason why they should not amalgamate their religious forces. After several vain attempts to work together, however, it was found that there were several irreconcilable differences between them.

In the first place, although both were immersionists, Wiebe's people immersed forward, while Eckert practiced immersion backwards; the Krimmers were strong believers in premillennialism, and insisted in making much of the belief as a church doctrine, while the Mennonite Brethren believed in a more liberal interpretation of that event; Eckert and his followers perhaps partly as a result of their earlier Lutheran connections, favored the use of musical instruments in worship, while Wiebe was strongly op-

posed to their presence even in private homes. Most objectionable of all Eckert's religious practices, however, to the other side was the "sister kiss" which he advocated and openly practiced in his congregation. These differences seemed serious enough to prevent a union of these two bodies. Eckert finally left for other parts, and his followers in Ebenfeld finally affiliated with the later Mennonite Brethren Conference as organized under Elder Abraham Shellenberg. The Krimmer Brethren have retained their independent ecclesiastical organization, with their own missionary and charitable institutions. But in the field of education they have united with the Mennonite Brethren in the support of Tabor College.

The Krimmer Brethren have been among the most ardent evangelists among the various Mennonite groups, and among the most liberal supporters of the mission cause. Although small in number, they have established several home mission stations, including one for Negroes in North Carolina, and several on the foreign field. Some years ago they founded an orphan asylum, not for their own, but imported orphan children. This work was not a success, however, and the institution was finally transformed from a children's home to one for old people. The church, small as it is, conducts its own hospital, and a Bible and preparatory school at Inman. Their official church paper, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* is issued from their own publishing house in Chicago.

The region about Hillsboro, Inman, and Lehigh, Kansas, is still the center of the settlement, but other congregations have been founded in other states both through colonization and evangelization. The South Dakota congregations have come largely from such Huterites as have left the Bruderhofs or never had joined them in America and were thus without any official church affiliation. The total membership now is not much over fifteen hundred. A recent Conference report indicates that at that Conference delegates were present from six congregations in Kansas; two from Oklahoma; two from South Dakota; two from Saskatchewan; and one each from Nebraska, California, and Arizona. These fifteen congregations were served by forty-five

ministers. Besides there were twenty-six missionaries and evangelists on the workers' list at that time.

Mennonite Brethren

Much larger than either of the other two groups above mentioned, but, with the exception of Eckert's congregation, not organized as early in America, was the branch of the church known as the *Brueder Gemeinde*, or the Mennonite Brethren Church. These, too, trace their history back to Russia where in 1860 eighteen souls, but not a preacher among them, dissatisfied with the rather formal, ritualistic and unemotional religious life that prevailed among the Molotschna Mennonites at that time, and influenced largely by a strong spirit of emotional evangelism that was sweeping over the German colonists of South Russia, withdrew from the Mennonite body to organize a church of their own. Instead of leading young people into church membership over the easy road of religious instruction in the home and the schools, ending up in a course of catechetical instruction, they believed that the only sure entrance was by way of the hard road of a definite religious experience which often involved a bitter struggle with the powers of darkness, and accompanied with great anguish of soul; but if victorious, followed by definite assurance of salvation and feeling of great joy. Like the Krimmer Brethren, they demanded that all converts to the new faith, whether former church members or not, must be rebaptized by immersion. They assumed the name *Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde*, because by retaining the name Mennonite they hoped to retain also all the special concessions which the Czar's government had originally granted the first settlers from Prussia, and which under any other name they would likely have forfeited.

The movement at first aroused the most bitter antagonism among the Mennonites from whom they withdrew; and to the discredit of many of the elders of the main body it must be said that in their attempt to prevent the withdrawal of the new group, they used means that were decidedly inconsistent with their historic doctrine of toleration, and nonresistant faith. It was only after sev-

eral appeals to the St. Petersburg government, and the intervention of influential officials at Odessa that the Mennonite Brethren were permitted to withdraw peaceably and organize their own independent church. The growth was steady from the first, although by 1874 the whole number was still less than one thousand.

With the exception of the Eckert group near Gnadenau, as already indicated, there were no organized congregations to emigrate as such in the early years. In nearly every settlement, however, there was a limited number of individuals who in Russia had been members of the Brethren churches. In most cases these soon found one another in America, and forming small groups they worshipped together in private homes. Organized church life can hardly be said to have existed before the coming of Elder Abraham Shellenberger to Kansas in 1879. With the advent of Shellenberg, who was accompanied by a number of Brethren families, aggressive measures were adopted for conserving the scattered members, and securing new members largely at the expense of the old church. Through numerous revival meetings and other evangelistic efforts considerable inroad was made upon the membership of other branches for some years. The present membership is about eight thousand. Hillsboro, Kansas, the seat of Tabor College, and of their publishing interests is still the headquarters of the church, although Oklahoma has now more congregations than Kansas. Being immersionists, they have always been rather sympathetic towards the Baptists both in Russia and America, and have lost some members to them. Stressing as they do the emotional side of their religious natures, they naturally crave new experiences more eagerly than other Mennonite groups; and perhaps for that reason are more readily victimized by unhealthy religious movements. In certain localities they have lost heavily to the Adventists, and other more or less fanatical sects.

The whole body is organized under one Conference which meets annually since 1878. The sessions are open to the laity as well as the ministry, and are always largely attended. Conference discussions center largely around the missionary, evangelistic and

educational problems of the church, but occasionally questions relating to religious practices and human conduct are submitted for consideration. From the answers to these questions we learn something of the characteristic religious and social beliefs of the Mennonite Brethren.

The Conference of 1890 held in Nebraska recommended the observance of the following religious holidays: New Year, Good Friday, Easter (two days), Ascension Day, Pentecost (two days), Christmas (two days). Among forbidden practices were the carrying of fire arms, membership in the Farmers' Alliance or other secret organizations; participation in political campaigns, although members were advised not to vote against prohibition. It was unanimously agreed at this Conference that in the matter of wearing beards members should so conduct themselves as not to offend the church. Three years later at the Minnesota Conference in answer to the question as to whether a minister might engage in business enterprises it was suggested that he should be careful to choose a business which would neither compromise himself nor in any way be of any injury to his fellows. It was also decided at this session that such offices as Justice of the Peace, and Constable were not open to members of the church.

In 1900 the following practices were discouraged: writing foolish articles and jokes for the newspapers; attending weddings of members with unconverted partners; and entering law suits. Later sessions went on record against life insurance, marriage of cousins, and Fourth of July celebrations. As a substitute for the latter it was suggested that "something better" should be offered the young people on that day, missionary festivals as an example. At a session held at Mountain Lake, in 1919 the ticklish and somewhat complicated question—Can a member of the Brethren church, under present conditions in the United States, become a citizen and retain his non-resistance? If so, how? If not, what course should our brethren follow who otherwise can not be guaranteed legal title to their land? was wisely sidestepped and referred to the Committee on Exemptions which had been appointed during the war, and which fortunately for the occasion had not

yet been relieved from duty. Although the question was a pertinent one, it likely died in Committee. This subject has troubled more than one Mennonite since the war who wished to remain loyal to both his earthly and heavenly citizenship.

Church of God In Christ

(Holdemanites)

This branch of the church had its origin in Wayne county, Ohio, where in 1858 John Holdeman, an old Mennonite layman, ambitious to preach, but despairing of being called to the ministry through the uncertain chances of the lot, decided to enter the ministry without waiting for the conventional call. He claimed to be guided in his course of action by visions and dreams in one of which he heard the call to preach. He therefore began to hold meetings in his own house, and secured a few followers, including the members of his own household. The old church he maintained had departed from the truth as first taught by Menno Simon; and his own organization was now the true church of God which had maintained the lineage of the saints from the days of the Apostles through Menno Simon and the early Mennonites. He departed very little from the fundamentals of early conservative Mennonitism, but added two distinct practices of his own—refusal to accept interest on money, and the practice of “laying on of hands” after baptism.

His own small group which he now called the “Church of God in Christ” grew slowly in numbers. By 1865 the little flock consisted of twenty members. In the early seventies the whole church which was still largely a family affair, moved bodily to central Kansas. It would perhaps have died out completely within a few years if Holdeman, who took up his residence near Canton, had not found a rich field for proselyting in the early eighties among the shiftless and spiritually decadent Polish “Cantoners” already spoken of in another chapter. By furnishing these Polish Mennonites, who had been deserted by their own leader, a new spiritual objective, Holdeman no doubt did them a real service. Later a number of additions were secured also from among the

Kleine Gemeinde group in Manitoba. And so, although of American origin the whole membership is almost still exclusively composed of the descendants of these two Russian groups. A recent yearbook gives the total membership of the church as 2,100. In Manitoba the so-called Holdemanites are next to the General Conference and the Mennonite Brethren the most progressive of all the various divisions, especially as regards their attitude toward educational questions. They are still to be distinguished from their neighbors, however, by their beards and collarless shirts. The women, too, dress severely plain.

Conference of Defenseless Mennonites of North America

This small group of about fifteen hundred with a pretentious title is composed of a number of small congregations which trace their origin to two conservative church leaders—Isaac Peters of Henderson, Nebraska, and Aaron Wall of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Isaac Peters came from Russia as an exile in 1874, ordered from his native land because of his active interest in promoting the migration movement among his brethren. In Russia he had been an elder in the Pordenau congregation in Molotschna; but because of too much *Gleichstellung der Welt* on the part of some of the members of that congregation he had withdrawn from their fellowship sometime before his coming to America. In Nebraska he affiliated for a time with the Henderson congregation, but here, too, he found too much “worldly conformity” including the use of tobacco. About one-fourth of the congregation followed him into an independent organization. For a time his little flock had some affiliation with the Old Mennonites with whose conservative views they agreed. They never entered any of the Old Mennonite conferences, however.

The other charter congregation of this conference was that under the leadership of Aaron Wall of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Wall was one of the pioneer elders in the Mountain Lake congregation organized by William Ewert of Kansas in 1876. For some years this church seemed to prosper. But in 1888, owing to differences of opinion regarding progressive methods of Sun-

day school work and other questions of church practice, the congregation divided into three parts—what later became known as the more progressive wing, the Bethel church, Bergfeld, and the more conservative group which Wall himself finally joined and which became known as the Bruderthal congregation. Like Peters, Wall was opposed to the use of tobacco, and generally favored conservative practices. The Bruderthalers baptize in a stream but not by immersion. They introduced footwashing with their communion service, and the preachers serve without pay. Among other worldly innovations to which they were at first opposed according to one not of their number was “blackened” boots, and shirts with collars. For a time they also flirted with the Old Mennonites but never completely affiliated with them.

In 1910 the two congregations above mentioned, together with another of like views at Inman, Kansas, united to form a new conference to which they gave the name “Conference of Defenseless Mennonites of North America.” Several other congregations in other states have since been added to this original number. There is one “Bruderthal” congregation in Manitoba, and another in Saskatchewan. There is little difference today between this group of churches and the other divisions which favor progressive church work. They are ardent supporters of Sunday schools, mission work and other progressive religious activities. In recent years there has been a tendency to amalgamate with another small group, not of Russian extraction, the “Defenseless Mennonites” found principally in Illinois and Indiana.

MANITOBA ¹.

In their religious development the Manitoba Mennonites followed the same independent course as in their social and educational history. No further reference need be made here to such groups as have already been mentioned, and which were represented in Manitoba as well as in the United States, as the *Kleine*

¹. Much of the information about Manitoba has been furnished by Rev. H. H. Ewert of Gretna, Manitoba. The opinions, and errors, however, if any, are mine.

Gemeinde, Holdemanites, Brueder Gemeinde, and Bruderthalers. Not much need be said either of the Mennonites in Saskatchewan, for nearly all the groups in the latter province were but daughter settlements coming originally from Manitoba. Only the groups that are distinctive to Canada will be mentioned here. Among these the most progressive is an organization of which there are a number of congregations in both provinces known as the

Conference of Mennonites of Middle Canada

The members of this small conference hold practically the same views as do those of the General Conference of Mennonites of North America. In fact practically all of the congregations of this group in Saskatchewan became members of the General Conference; the Manitoba church has not yet seen fit to do so. The Middle Canada Conference is the most liberal supporter of both the Gretna and Rosthern schools; they send their children to the public schools without protest, although they regret the total elimination of German from their school system; many of them graduate from the high schools and enter the various professions; one of them was a Rhodes' scholar some years ago; the Conference issues a monthly church paper, the *Mitarbeiter*, and supports the various missionary and philanthropic enterprises of the church at large. H. H. Ewert and David Toews, the former from Manitoba, and the latter from Saskatchewan, are both prominent ministers and educational leaders in this Conference. In 1918 this group embraced a membership of two thousand one hundred and thirty-six, two-thirds of whom were located in Saskatchewan.

Bergthaler

Most of the settlers on the Eastern Reserve, it will be remembered, originally came from the colony of Bergthal in Russia; and while not a distinct division of the church there, yet they were a self-governing ecclesiastical unit. They retained their isolated and independent position in Manitoba and so developed distinctive practices which set them off from some of the other groups. Their first elder, Gerhard Wiebe, was decidedly of a conservative character. Next to the Old Colonists they are among

the most conservative still of the Canadian Mennonites. They strongly opposed both the introduction of the public schools, and the loss of the German as a means of instruction. For a time there was much talk of emigration to Mexico, but with discouraging reports from the few that had located there the Mexican fever died down. In the early eighties a number of the first immigrants, dissatisfied with the low, swampy land on which they were located moved to the west side of the Red river. A small number also moved to Minnesota. Although conservative, all have given up the old village system of farming. It should be remembered here that Bergthaler is not the name of an ecclesiastical organization, but is used merely to designate the colonists who originally came from the Bergthal colony in Russia. East of the river the congregation, consisting of a number of separate meeting houses, goes by the name of Chortitz. Most of the Bergthalers who moved west of the river are now called Sommerfelders. This name originated as follows: In the early nineties a division arose among the Bergthalers west of the river because of the school question. About one-fourth of the congregation supported the cause of better schools; the other three-fourths withdrew from the progressive wing and under a new bishop organized a separate congregation which they called Sommerfeld because the elder lived in a village by that name. The progressive fourth are now the congregation numbering some six hundred, which is included in the Conference of Middle Canada.

Sommerfelders

The Sommerfelders, it will be seen, therefore, are the larger portion of the Bergthalers who moved west of the river, and are similar in faith to the large number of Bergthalers who remained east of the river, and who ecclesiastically now form a large congregation of several thousand which is called Chortitz. The two are still quite one except that they constitute separate congregations, although there is free exchange of religious fellowship between them. Both have grown somewhat more liberal in recent years especially in matters of education. The Sommerfelders as

a church have taken over the Altona school; and for a time it even seemed that they might unite with the other groups to conduct a common educational enterprise. As seen in a previous chapter the effort failed, however, and consequently the former assumed exclusive responsibility. The membership of the Sommerfelder group in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan numbers somewhere near five thousand at present. We now come to the most picturesque of all the Canadian Mennonite groups, the

Old Colonists

These are found in the southwestern corner of the Western Reserve, in the municipality of Reinland, and for that reason they are sometimes called Reinlanders. Some years ago the surplus population, larger than that in the original settlement, emigrated to Saskatchewan near Swift Current and Hague. The Old Colonists, it will be remembered, came under the leadership of their elder, Johann Wiebe, from the Grossfuerstenland settlement, in Russia, a daughter colony of Chortitz. They are today the most conservative of all the groups in America, and are a good example of what most of the Russian Mennonites were in 1874 in their religious beliefs and practices. Early in the eighties when some of these Fuerstenlanders on the outskirts of the settlement began to take on American airs and farming customs, especially when they showed an inclination to exchange village life for the farm homestead, old Bishop Wiebe excommunicated all those who left the village, or sold their land to non-Mennonite farmers. These latter affiliated with the Bergthalers who were more liberal in this respect. This left a conservative nucleus who have changed but little in their social and economic customs, as well as in religious beliefs and practice, since their advent upon the Manitoba prairies in 1875. It was the attempt of the Provincial governments to modernize their school system that brought about their exodus to Mexico where they are starting all over again the life they lived in Canada up to a few years ago.

At the time of their exodus from Saskatchewan and Manitoba which has just about been completed, they lived in farm vil-



Old Colonist Meeting House



Old Colonist Combination House and Stable

lages fashioned after old Russian models. On Sundays they worshipped in meeting houses without paint. The hard seats without backs, added little to the comfort of listening to long sermons read from a book of manuscripts, in a monotonous, sleep-inducing, sing-song tone. The preacher never looked at his audience. The merest suggestion of a raised eyelid, the least gesture with his hands, or the slightest departure in any respect from the practices of the fathers would have been met not only with astonishment but instant disapproval on the part of such of the congregation as were still sufficiently awake to notice the innovation. In dress, the preachers as well as the laity had to conform to the long established conventionalities. White collars, bearded chins and such vanities as shining watch chains, and their like were peremptorily forbidden. To be in good standing and a proper example to his flock, the *Alt Kolonier* preacher should appear in the pulpit in the old style sailor-fashioned trousers tucked in high topped boots. Women likewise were to be garbed in conventional dress-aprons and shawls, somber colored clothes cut after uniform and prescribed patterns.

The language of the pulpit was German, but that of every day conversation was some form of "Plattdeutsch," imported from Prussia to Russia more than a century before. Prayer was offered in silence, the worshippers kneeling. In their singing they used an old hymn book also imported from their Prussian ancestral homes; and were led by a *Vorsinger*. The hymns were without notes, and the melodies to which they were sung had undergone wonderful transformations as they came down through the generations. Since the singing of different parts was regarded as a worldly innovation, all sang in unison.

Religious affiliations with other Mennonite bodies there was none whatever. Participation in the civil and political life that centered in the railway towns that had grown up along the outskirts of the settlements was unknown. Church members were even forbidden to take up their dwelling in these towns or engage in business. All such religious or social affiliation was regarded as being unequally yoked with the world, and hence to be strictly

avoided. Public schools as we saw were tabooed, and the German language insisted upon. All these regulations were enforced by means of a strict application of the church ban, to which was added the practice of "Avoidance" or *Meidung* as it was called in German. This latter practice demanded that all such as were excommunicated for any reason must also be ostracized by their fellows in all domestic, social and business relations as well as in religious fellowship. According to the conservative confession of faith adopted at Dortrecht in 1632 the reason for this practice was "that we may not be defiled by intercourse with him—and that he may be made ashamed, and thereby amend his ways"—a reason no doubt based on a correct literal quotation of Scripture, but upon rather poor psychology as well. When it is remembered, however, that among these Russians the social and economic life of the community was so closely bound up with that of the church it can readily be seen that the complete isolation resulting from the avoidance was so effective that the most hardened sinner would usually be brought to a confession of his wrong doing.

Civil office, modern clothing, modern houses, the English language, Sunday schools, public schools, higher schools of any sort, prayer meetings, salaried ministers, telephones, automobiles, which they called "hell wagons," and numerous other institutions which are usually regarded as symptoms of progress—all these were considered as of the "world," and to be given a wide berth by all those who wished to be true Christians.

Such were the Old Colonists and their customs, some five or six thousand of them, at the time they began their trek to Mexico a few years ago in search of a new land of liberty, where they might practice the faith of their fathers, untrammelled as their consciences dictated. Wrong they were no doubt in many of their activities according to our modern notions; but they were nevertheless an honest and sincere people, of sturdy character, useful citizens, and no more addicted to religious formality than were our Puritan forefathers at the time of their trek to Massachusetts some centuries ago in search of the same religious liberty.

XIII.

KEEPING THE FAITH

Opposition to war, to capital punishment, and the taking of human life in any form and for any purpose was one of the fundamental tenets of the Mennonite faith from the beginning. It was to maintain the doctrine of non-resistance that the Mennonites emigrated from Russia to America in the early seventies. The Committee of Twelve was instructed to obtain definite assurance from the American government that Mennonite scruples on this point would be respected in case of emigration. In Canada this concession was granted by an Order in Council in 1873, but in the United States no such definite recognition could be secured. The tradition that President Grant had given the delegates a definite promise to exempt the Russian immigrants from military service was based on nothing more than the President's opinion as expressed to two of the delegates in the course of an interview that in case of future wars it would not be likely that any one would be forced into service contrary to his own will. To most of those who settled in the United States the conscription act of 1864, which exempted all from service who had conscientious scruples upon a money payment, seemed ample guarantee that in the future, too, no one would be forced to do what his conscience forbade. Up to that time wars in America had all been fought by volunteers; and there was no indication anywhere that there would be any radical change from that policy in the future.

To make assurance doubly sure, however, a number of the immigrants to the different western states desired some sort of legal state action guaranteeing freedom from military duty. In the absence of a Federal conscription act, compulsory military service in time of war and militia duty in time of peace is left to the individual states. In as much as war seemed but a remote possibility, and all western states were engaged in a keen rivalry

to secure settlers for their vacant lands, these guarantees, urged by railroad companies and eager land departments, were not difficult to secure from the Legislatures. In fact many of the states of the Union already had in one form or another either in their constitutions or on the statute books, some sort of recognition of conscientious scruples on matters pertaining to war.

But Kansas was the first of several states to pass additional legislation specifically for the Russian Mennonites. The Wyandotte constitution of 1859 had provided for exemption as later Legislatures might direct. In 1865 the Legislature had enacted a law providing that all those who had conscientious scruples against bearing arms might secure exemption from military service by appearing on the first day of each May before the county treasurer, to make an affidavit as to their scruples, and to pay the sum of thirty dollars to the public school fund. This was the law at the time of the emigration. Undoubtedly it was for the purpose of meeting the wishes of the delegates of 1873 that Governor Osborne in his message to the Legislature on January 15, 1874, proposed an amendment to the existing law. Speaking of the desirability of securing Mennonite immigrants for Kansas the Governor said.:

It is hoped that large accessions may be made of these worthy settlers, and it may properly be considered whether any class of people who are conscientiously opposed to bearing arms should be compelled to pay an onerous tax to be relieved therefrom. It strikes me as incongruous that such religious convictions should be made taxable by our laws.

The tax referred to, of course, was the thirty dollar fine payable each May for the privilege of exemption, of which no doubt the Mennonite delegates had asked to be relieved. In accordance with this recommendation of the Governor the Legislature on March 9 of the same year repealed that part of the law of 1865 which inflicted the penalty for non-performance of militia service. Otherwise the exemption clause remained the same.

This measure was highly lauded by the friends of Kansas, both Mennonite settlers and state officials, and presented to pros-

pective settlers as an added inducement to locate in that state. Rival states, competing for Mennonite immigrants, decided on similar legislation. An exemption law had been prepared for the Nebraska Legislature in 1875, but before it could be passed the Legislature adjourned; and since that body met only bi-ennially it was not until 1877 that Nebraska passed a law similar to the one in Kansas except that the claimant for exemption when he appeared before the county clerk was required to produce two witnesses of his membership in a non-resistent religious organization. The Minnesota law, passed the same year, provided that affidavits needed to be renewed only every five years instead of annually as in the Kansas and Nebraska statutes. Dakota being still a territory was not competent to pass on legislation of this sort.

There were three states now that exempted Mennonites unconditionally from militia service in peace and war. Of course, in case of Federal legislation such laws would not guarantee them against being drawn into the army. But there was every reason to believe at that time that future wars, judging from the past, would continue to be fought by volunteers; or at least the Federal government would do no more than designate the number of troops each state was to furnish, leaving to the states themselves the method of how the troops were to be raised. In either case these state exemptions would be effective. The Mennonites believed that they had found for all time in America that liberty of conscience in matters of war which had been denied them in Russia.

That the Russian Mennonites took these laws seriously is shown by the fact that they kept a much closer watch of the political horizon than did the native American Mennonites who had lived here for nearly two centuries; and sometimes scented danger when there was none. It was perhaps only natural in view of the Civil war which had just recently closed, and because of their ignorance of our democratic institutions that they should be unduly alarmed over the political animosities aroused by the disputed election of 1876. In order to be perfectly sure of their

status in case war should break out over this issue, Elder Jacob Buller of Alexanderwohl, and Elder Jacob Wiebe of Gnadenau paid a visit to the county clerk of Marion county on February 3, 1877, to seek an answer to two questions regarding the Kansas exemption law on which they were not clear, namely: Was it necessary for each claimant to appear personally before the clerk to make out the affidavit as to church membership, or was it sufficient to have the elder send in a certified list of those who could qualify? and secondly, Was it necessary to appear annually?

Evidently the Mennonites thus far had not been availing themselves very generally of the provisions of the Kansas statute; for the clerk seemed to know nothing of the law. But after investigation he answered the latter question in the affirmative; and as to the former, he gave it as his opinion that each claimant who wished to qualify must appear in person. He further suggested that a convenient day be set apart both in Alexanderwohl and in Gnadenau for him to meet all those interested, and arrange all necessary details for taking the affidavits. They were no doubt these same solicitous elders who had prevailed upon C. B. Schmidt, the Moses of the Kansas Mennonites, to inquire of the Attorney-General whether the law applied to aliens as well as to citizens. The Attorney-General replied that in his opinion only citizens were subject to military duty. It was partly due to this belief that many of the settlers hesitated for many years to take out naturalization papers. The Kansas Mennonites were needlessly alarmed, however, over the possibility of trouble in 1876. The editor of the *Zur Heimath* assured his readers that there was not the faintest possibility of another Civil war.

The first American war with which the immigrants of 1874 came into contact was that with Spain in 1898. The older American Mennonites evidently felt no fear that they would be forced to take part in this struggle contrary to their principles; but the Russians did not share this confidence. One of the groups called a special session of the Western District Conference soon after the outbreak of the war to discuss the whole question as it affected their special status. The resolutions adopted at this Conference

on May 7, confirmed their historic attitude on the war question; but suggested furthermore a willingness on the part of Mennonites to aid their adopted country in any way not contrary to their religious convictions. They recommended especially voluntary Red Cross work as a service which did not violate their historic faith, a service furthermore which their fathers had rendered most acceptably to the Czar's government in Russia in the Crimean war.

When Congress passed a new universal military service act in 1903, declaring all citizens between the ages of eighteen and forty-five subject to such service, but exempting all members of a religious organization opposed to war, the Western District Conference again became interested, desiring especially to know whether the Federal law would exempt such Mennonites as did not live in states which had no exemption laws of their own. A committee, of which H. P. Krehbiel was made secretary, was appointed to investigate the relation between the Federal and state laws on this subject. After writing successively to the Attorney-General of Kansas, one of the Senators of the same state, the Attorney-General of the United States, and the President, Krehbiel reported to the Conference of 1904 that according to his interpretation of all the correspondence he had with these various authorities Mennonites would be exempt in case of Federal conscription; but if the method of raising troops should be left to the individual states then conscientious scruples would be respected only in such states as had constitutional or statutory provisions to that effect. But since states as such never entered upon war on their own initiative, Mennonites might rest assured, he thought, that their consciences in matters of war would still be respected.

It was not until 1917 that the Mennonite doctrine of non-resistance was put to the test. Nearly all the armies up to that time as already indicated had been filled by volunteers. In the Revolutionary war Mennonites were not forced to join the "associators" in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, the states where large numbers of non-resistants were found at that time. In only one of the struggles, that of the Civil war, was conscrip-

tion enforced for a time—in the North in 1864, and in the South in 1862. In the Federal act provision was made for the exemption of those having conscientious scruples upon the payment of \$300; the Confederacy provided for a similar exemption upon payment of \$500. This latter act was repealed, however, in 1864, after which such Virginia Mennonites as did not escape into the North were forced into active service. The Federal exemption clause did not arouse the same bitterness against the non-resistants as did the act of 1917, for the reason that the Civil War act permitted all those who were drafted to furnish substitutes, irrespective of conscientious scruples, sometimes for less than \$300 and at times for much more, depending entirely upon the bargaining power of the substitute and the intensity of the draftee's desire for release.

By the time of the war of 1917, however, the practice of warfare had been so radically changed, and that struggle was conducted on such a gigantic scale, demanding the complete and immediate mobilization of all the man power of the nation, that conscription was resorted to from the beginning with a substantial majority in Congress and with very little protest from the public at large.

For the Mennonites, Dunkards, Quakers and other non-resistant groups the conscription act immediately presented a serious problem. It is the purpose here to recount only the experiences of the Russian Mennonites in meeting this crisis; but it must not be forgotten that other groups of Mennonites as well as other peace denominations all had similar and common experiences with these Russians. Soon after war was declared in April, when it was rumored that Congress contemplated passing a general conscription act, most of the western groups of Mennonites through Conference sessions appointed military exemption committees to represent the churches in such action as seemed necessary to secure recognition of their historic peace principles. The committee selected by the Western District Conference consisted of Dr. J. W. Kliever, H. P. Krehbiel and P. H. Unruh. Among the active men in this matter from the other groups were D. E. Harder of

the Krimmer Brethren, and H. W. Lohrenz of the Mennonite Brethren.

The Western District Conference committee, with which other committees frequently co-operated, held its first session on April 12, when the Mennonite attitude toward the war was defined by a confirmation of the resolutions passed in 1898 at the time of the Spanish war. The first task of the committee was to work for a satisfactory exemption clause in the coming conscription act. Telegrams were sent to Peter Jansen, a former state senator of Nebraska, who was in Washington at the time, and to Maxwell Kratz, a Mennonite lawyer of Philadelphia to represent the Mennonite cause before Congress. These two men together with P. H. Richert who joined them from Kansas, interviewed a number of Senators and Congressmen, including a Mennonite Congressman from Iowa, urging complete exemption or at least such service as was in no way connected with the military department of the Government. In the meantime numerous petitions from various Mennonite bodies were being sent to Congress asking for the same concessions. How much these interviews and petitions influenced the final result it is difficult to tell; but at any rate in consequence of these efforts together with similar pressure from Quakers, Dunkards and other non-resistant denominations, and following, no doubt, largely the precedents of earlier conscription acts both in the United States and England, the Committee on Military Affairs finally proposed this clause in the conscription act which became law on May 18, 1917, exempting from regular service:

Members of any well organized religious sect or organization at present organized and existing whose creed of principles forbid its members to participate in war in any form and whose religious convictions are against war or participation therein in accordance with the creed of principles of said organization. But no person shall be exempted from service in any capacity which the President shall declare non-combatant.

This clause was vigorously debated in Congress; several attempts were made to amend it; and one vote was taken in the Senate to repeal it; but it remained virtually as it came from the

hands of the Committee, and was the law under which a large number of young Mennonites were drafted into service, and taken to various camps during the summer and fall of 1917. Most of these young men had equipped themselves before leaving home with certificates from their local boards showing that they were entitled to be classed as non-combatants. Although the President had not yet specifically designated what service should be classed as non-combatant, yet about half of the Mennonite young men during this year and for the remainder of the war chose the service that usually was recognized as coming under that head. With the exception of an occasional bit of unpleasantness arising out of the fact that camp officials were under the necessity of dealing with them as a special class there was little friction between this class of men and the military authorities and we may dismiss these here without further comment. But the other half, with more tender consciences, and with a keener appreciation of the logic of their position, felt that to be consistent with their profession and conscientious scruples, they could not accept any service whatever which was conducted by and under the control of the military department of the government. To cook for soldiers who were to fight, or even to heal the sick for the purpose of restoring them to the fighting forces, to their way of thinking, was as much a part of the war process as to carry a gun. These refused work of any sort in the camps, even such as was usually called non-combatant, and often refused to wear the uniform. They were the absolutists, and finally came to be known as Conscientious Objectors, a term borrowed from England. It is of these that we shall deal here.

Just how large this group of Mennonite conscientious objectors was, and how many non-combatants there were is not definitely known, since complete statistics are not at present available. A few general statistics concerning both Mennonite and non-Mennonite objectors here may not be out of place, however, since it may help us to form an approximate estimate of the relative size of the Russian contingent among the Mennonites in general who refused to participate in active warfare. From a rather ca-

sual study of the whole Mennonite field of all branches, it would seem that there were all told something like two thousand Mennonite young men in all departments of the service during the war. Of this number perhaps about five hundred were descendants of the Russian immigrants. In the church as a whole the conscientious objectors and the non-combatants seemed nearly equally divided as to numbers. The following random observations which have come under the casual notice of the writer may indicate at least the relative number of those who chose to follow their consciences to their logical conclusions. The Huterites seemingly were the only group who stood as a unit against service of any sort. The Krimmer Brethren with a membership of about fifteen hundred had fifty young men in camp. Of these twenty-eight were conscientious objectors; twenty took non-combatant service; and two enlisted in the regular army, one of whom died on the battlefield. Of the General Conference and the Mennonite Brethren groups in Kansas and Oklahoma over half were conscientious objectors; on the Pacific coast and in Minnesota there were less conscientious objectors, and more non-combatants. There were scarcely a score all told among the Russian Mennonites who entered the regular service ¹.

¹.Professor C. C. Janzen, speaking of the Mennonites of Central Kansas only, comes to the following conclusions regarding the Mennonites of this region, based on careful investigation:

"The majority of the young men of Russian Mennonite descent accepted non-combatant work in the Quarter Master corps, or in the Medical service of the U. S. Army. Approximately seventy-five per cent of the General Conference young men did non-combatant work; about six per cent did regular service, and nineteen refused any military service whatever. Of the Mennonite Brethren Conference about sixty per cent accepted non-combatant service, and forty per cent refused. None did regular service. Members of the Krimmer Brethren of this settlement did not take service of any kind. Among the Holdemanite and Old Mennonite churches a similar hundred per cent refusal seems to have prevailed."

Professor Janzen gives the following detailed statistics for central

According to Major Kellog, the total number of conscientious objectors from all denominations and parties examined by the special Board of Inquiry was twenty-one hundred. Half of these seemingly were Mennonites. Of the whole number above mentioned, fifteen hundred were recommended for farm and industrial furloughs; eighty for work in the Friends Reconstruction Unit; three hundred and ninety for non-combatant service; and one hundred and twenty sent back into the regular service as insincere. The above summary does not include thirteen hundred who took non-combatant service in the beginning, nor some four hundred who were sent to Ft. Leavenworth. An interesting study made of one thousand of the above in twelve different camps by a special psychological board indicates the following distribution according to religious affiliation.

Mennonites	554
Friends	80
International Bible Students	60
Dunkards	37
Israelites of the House of David.....	32
Church of Christ	31
Church of God (Colored)	20
Seventh Day Adventists	20
Pentecostal Assembly	13
All other denominations	206

Three hundred and seventy-one conscientious objectors were court martialed, and sent to Ft. Leavenworth for terms ranging

Kansas, including no doubt nearly all of the Mennonites of Russian descent in central Kansas:

General Conference:

5,145 members; 202 in army; regular service, 13; non-combatants, 126; conscientious objectors, 63.

Mennonite Brethren:

1,229 members; 40 in army; regular service, none; non-combatants, 20; conscientious objectors, 20.

Krimmer Brethren:

505 members; 15 in army; regular service, none; non-combatants, none; conscientious objectors, 15.

from ten to thirty years. Over one-third of these, one hundred and thirty to be exact, were Mennonites. Of the Mennonite contingent, seventy-six were from the Russian groups. This is a much larger number than was furnished by any other branch of the church. The Old Mennonites, representing largely the descendants of the Pennsylvania immigrants of two hundred years ago, claimed only thirty of this number, although the constituency represented by these thirty was more than double that represented by the seventy-six Russians. The reason for the unusually large relative number of Russians among the Mennonite absolutists is to be sought, no doubt, in the fact that the former have always been more vitally concerned about their non-resistant principles than other groups—having made three treks in their history for consciences sake; while the Pennsylvanians never were forced into exile because of their peace principles after they left their Swiss homes in the early eighteenth century. The fact, too, that the Russians spoke the German language, and were concentrated in western camps may have some bearing on the matter.

The War Department found the Conscientious Objector a puzzling problem. No provision had been made for him in the conscription act; and his appearance evidently had not been anticipated by the law makers. For a time he was left entirely to the tender mercies of local camp officials, who often had little knowledge and oftener still less sympathy for the law that granted him even non-combatant privileges, to say nothing of his demand for complete exemption. Few of those in authority had any appreciation of conscientious scruples. The President's failure to define non-combatant service tended to further complicate the whole status of the absolutists. In all the camps throughout the country wherever Mennonites and other conscientious objectors were found, they were subjected to abuse and ridicule, and were considered fair game for any army chaplain or Y. M. C. A. secretary who cared to take a hand in their "conversion" into regular soldiers. Especially those who refused to wear the uniform were often severely handled by under-officers, sometimes encouraged by those higher up. In camps Funston and Travis particularly

where most of the Russians were mobilized the most flagrant abuses prevailed. The situation finally became serious enough to induce the War Department just before the armistice to remove two officials, a major and a captain for permitting unnecessary rough treatment of the objectors, much to the disgust of the *Kansas City Star* which continued throughout the war, and after, to be the most rabid antagonist of any leniency shown those having religious scruples against participating in war, as well as the most unreliable reporter of any news concerning them.

Some of the men in Funston were brutally handled in the guard house; they were bayoneted, beaten, and tortured by various forms of the water cure; eighteen men one night were aroused from their sleep and held under cold showers until one of them became hysterical under the treatment; another had the hose played upon his head until he became unconscious. Standing at attention on the cold side of their barracks, in scant clothing, subjected to the abusive language of passers by, for hours and days at a time; chased by guards on motorcycles across the fields, under the guise of taking exercise, until they dropped in their tracks from sheer exhaustion; spending days in the guard house on a bread and water diet—all these were the common experiences of the most sincere of the conscientious objectors, both Mennonites and those of other religious faiths. Major Kellog in his book "The Conscientious Objector"² is authority for the statement that most of these hazings were undertaken in the spirit of fun, and on the whole did little harm to the objector. In view of the fact, however, that most of these unnecessary cruelties were perpetrated with the consent and at the command of those in authority, one could hardly class them under the head of innocent and harmless hazing. Whether the following treatment of four Hutterites, three Hofer brothers, John, David and Michael, and Jacob Wipf can be said to have been undertaken in the spirit of fun and whether it did the objectors no harm, the reader is left to conclude for himself. The story is told here by one who is not himself a

²The Conscientious Objector: Walter Guest Kellogg, 1919.

Mennonite, but who heard it from the lips of two of those who passed through the ordeal and survived:

The attitude of the Hutterian Brotherhood with regard to participation in warfare is perhaps the most uncompromising of all the various branches of the Mennonite church. Their treatment by the military authorities has therefore been unusually harsh.

When the four young men, three of whom were married, left their home in South Dakota for camp Lewis their troubles commenced on the way on account of their beards. The other boys on the train amused themselves by jeering at the bearded objectors, and even cutting their hair and beards with a clipper, to make them appear ridiculous when they would arrive at camp. They wept over these indignities suffered at the very start, anticipating what might be in store for them. This treatment of members of religious sects whose religion includes the wearing of beards has been a common experience during the war. When they arrived at camp Lewis they were asked to sign a card, promising obedience to all the military commands. Being absolute objectors to war service on religious grounds, they refused to sign. They likewise refused to take up any line of military service in the camp. They were commanded to step into line and march along with the rest to the drill ground. This they also refused, and refused to put on the military uniform in place of the peculiar home-made garb which they were wearing like all Hutterian Mennonites. Hence they were put into the guard house in close confinement. The cursing and reviling that was heaped upon them by the guards was especially painful to them.

After two months in the guard house, the four men were courtmartialed and sentenced to 37 years which, however, was reduced to 20 years by the camp commander. The place of confinement was to be the military prison on the island of Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay. Chained together two by two they were sent there in charge of four armed Lieutenants. By day the fetters on their ankles were unlocked, but never the hand cuffs on their wrists. At night they had to lie flat on their backs, doubly chained together. Little sleep did they have two nights of the trip, only moaning and weeping.

When they arrived at Alcatraz prison they were forced to take off their outer clothing and ordered to put on the military uniform, which they again refused; whereupon they were taken to the dungeon to be placed in solitary cells, down below in darkness, filth and stench. The uniform was thrown down by their side and they were told: "There you will have to stay until you give up the ghost—if you do not yield—like the last four that we carried out of these cells yesterday." They were left in their light underwear.

During the first four and half days they received no food whatsoever, and only half a glass of water every twenty-four hours. During the night they had to sleep on the wet, cold concrete floor without any blankets. The next one and half days they had to stand with their hands extended above their heads cross-wise, and were in this position manacled to the bars so high that they could barely reach the floor with their feet. The strain was such that David, the discharged man who is now at home, says he still feels the effects in his sides. At times he tried to lessen the terrible pain in his arms by working the chamber pail nearer with one foot so as to be able to get up on the pail with his feet and thus ease the strain. The men were not placed near enough together to speak to each other; but once David heard Jacob cry out: "Oh, have mercy, Almighty God."

At the end of five days they were taken out of the "hole" and brought into the court yard, where a number of other prisoners were standing. Some of them were touched with compassion at the pitiful sight of the sufferers, and one of them said with tears in his eyes: "Isn't it a shame to treat men like that"; for the men were covered with scurvy eruptions, were insect bitten and their arms had swollen so badly that they could not get the sleeves of their jackets over them. They had also been beaten with clubs in the dungeon, and Michael had once been beaten so brutally that he fell to the floor unconscious.

When they got out of the dungeon at noon on the fifth day they did not get any food; not before evening, when they got their supper. Then they were taken back to their cells for close confinement by day and night, not being allowed to speak with each other. Only on Sunday

did they get an hour for exercise in the open air of the stockade, under continuous close guard. In this manner their confinement continued for four months. About November 24, 1918, they were transferred from Alcatraz island to Ft. Leavenworth, chained together again, two by two in charge of six armed sergeants.

The journey went down through Texas and lasted four days and five nights. They arrived at Leavenworth at 11 o'clock at night, and were driven through the streets, under much noise and prodding of bayonets as if they were swine. Chained together at the wrists, carrying their satchels in one hand, and a Bible and extra pair of shoes under their arms, they were hurried on in a cruel manner up the hill toward the prison.

When they reached the gate they were covered with sweat, so that even their hair was wet, and in this condition in the raw winter air, they were again compelled to put off their own outer clothing, while the prison garb was being brought to them. It took two hours, till one o'clock in the morning until they were taken into the prison, and by that time they were chilled to the bone. In the morning they were called at five o'clock, and had again to stand and wait out in the cold. Joseph and Michael Hofer broke down and had to be taken to the hospital at once.

Jacob Wipf and David Hofer were sent to solitary confinement because they refused to take up prison work under military control. They had to stretch their hands out through the bars, where they were manacled together, and thus they had to stand nine hours a day on a bread and water diet. This continued for fourteen days, after which they would get regular meals for fourteen days and so on alternately.

When Joseph and Michael Hofer became ill, Jacob Wipf sent a telegram home to the wives of the two sufferers, who took the next train at night accompanied by a male friend to go and see their husbands. Both had small children. To make matters worse the depot agent insisted that the telegram had come from Ft. Riley, not from Ft. Leavenworth and sold them tickets to the wrong place. So they lost a day by going to Ft. Riley; and when they finally reached the military prison at eleven o'clock in the evening they found their husbands so near death that

hardly a word could be spoken. When they came again early in the morning Joseph was already dead, and his body in charge of the undertaker. He could not be seen any more, it was said; but his wife, Marie, pushed the guards aside, pressed on through various doors until she reached the Colonel where she plead in tears to be allowed to see her husband once more. She was conducted to the place where the corpse had already been prepared and laid in the casket. She eagerly looked in through her tears; but alas, they had clad her husband's body in the military uniform which during his life he had so valiantly refused to don because it was objectionable to men of his religion.

Michael died a few days later, and was fitted out in his civilian clothes at the special request of his father who had meanwhile arrived. When dying he stretched forth his hands and said: "Come, Lord Jesus, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

When the relatives had gone home with the dead. David who had been permitted to be at the death bed of his brother Michael, was again sent back to his chains in his solitary cell. He says: "All the next day I stood there and wept; but I could not wipe away my tears, as my hands were manacled to the prison bars." No one seemed to have any pity for him. The next morning, however, one of the guards was willing to go to the Colonel to ask a favor in behalf of David. He begged to be transferred to a cell where he could be nearer his friend Jacob, and could at least see him even though he were not allowed to talk with him. The guard took the message to the Colonel. In an hour he returned and told David to pack his things, for he had been discharged. This, however, was too sudden for him, and he could not believe it. But the guard took him along to the Colonel who affirmed the statement and gave him his discharge papers. A request to go and take leave of his friend Jacob was not granted. So he went out through the gate into the outside world. Here he again hesitated, doubts arising whether all this were a reality, or only a dream. Thus he remained standing until a guard came along and asked him what he was waiting for. "They tell me I am discharged, and I can't be sure of it," he said. The guard replied: "You can be sure of that, for no one gets out of here who is not discharged." David then said that he would very

much have liked to say good-bye to his friend Jacob. The guard told him to write a few lines on paper, and he would bring the note to Jacob the same day, which the guard did, as can be seen from Jacob's next letter to his wife in which he wrote: "Katherine, ask David, he will tell you everything better than I can write it." From this it is plain that he already knew of David's release.

On the sixth of December, the Secretary of War issued an order prohibiting further hand cuffing of prisoners to iron bars, and other cruel punishments. When, however, some of the Huterish Brethren about five days later went to see Jacob in his solitary cell, he was still handcuffed to the bars for nine hours a day. He got his bread and water at seven in the morning; at noon he was released from the bars for 30 minutes to eat his dinner of bread and water; and at 6:30 he was released and given the same fare for supper. Although he still had to sleep on the concrete floor, he had four blankets now; but these were infested with vermin (especially bed bugs) without number. Jacob sent the following message home with his friends: "I sometimes envy the three who have already been released from this misery. Then I think: Why is the Lord so hard on me? I have always endeavored to be faithful and industrious. I have never given the Brotherhood much cause for worry. Why should I now have to suffer so much longer single handed? But then it is a source of joy to me when I realize that the Lord considers me worthy to suffer for His sake. And I must concede that life here is like a palace in comparison with our former experiences."

From this the reader can form a conception of the experiences of these men in Alcatraz. If standing handcuffed for nine hours a day, on a bread and water diet, and sleeping among vermin on a concrete floor, was like a palace by comparison, it is no wonder Jacob finally felt that to be released by death would be preferable to a long continuation of life in that living grave at Alcatraz.

On December 12, pursuant to Secretary Baker's order above referred to, handcuffing to the bars was discontinued at the military prison. The solitary prisoners were also given planks on the floor to sleep on, which made it warmer for them at night than sleeping on the bare concrete. Further relief was given about New Year, after the monster petition for the release of the C. O's had been

laid before the Secretary of War. About this time Jacob became ill, and had to be removed to the hospital, whence his story (which corroborates fully David's account) was first written to the outside world. Jacob was not included among the 113 conscientious objectors who were released and discharged from the Disciplinary Barracks at Leavenworth on January 2, 1919, in pursuance of an order of the Secretary of War dated December 2nd. (Jacob Wipf was released at last April 13, 1919.)

Meanwhile most of the Huterites have migrated to Canada.

The case of these Huterite Mennonites is one of peculiar severity; but hundreds of Mennonites and other non-resistants have suffered similar indignities and cruelties in the camp guard houses and military prisons. If any one has the nerve to call these men cowards, let him do so. At any rate they are living examples of how harmless religious people have to suffer in this enlightened day because their views and convictions do not correspond with the rest.

Chicago, Ill., February, 1919.

Theo. H. Lunde.

This moving story reads more like a page from the martyrology of the European Mennonites in the sixteenth century, than like an actual experience in America of the twentieth. It is only fair to say, however, that most of the abuses described above were perpetrated by local camp officials without the full knowledge of the War Department at Washington. As already indicated several officials had been removed from one of the western camps for negligence in protecting the group of absolutists from unnecessary brutality. Both the President and the Secretary of War showed a sympathetic spirit toward the sincere objectors, and were bitterly criticized by the rabid militarists and intolerant ultra-patriots for their leniency toward this class of citizens. Secretary Baker stretched the conscription act to the limit to meet the situation. The Government at Washington was rather slow, however, in working out a satisfactory policy of taking care of the conscientious objectors; and it was largely the uncertainty of his status that was responsible for the abuses he suffered.

It was not until the spring of 1918 that a fairly constructive

program had been worked out by the War office; and even then there were still frequent cases of rough treatment; due to the inability of the officials at Washington to keep in close touch with all the details of the work that was being carried on by the vast military machine in charge of organizing the army. On March 18, 1918, upon the suggestion of the War Secretary, Congress passed a law permitting the department to furlough out certain men in the camp for agricultural purposes whenever it was deemed advisable. On March 20, the President for the first time defined non-combatant service. On April 22, the War Department completed its program for the conscientious objectors who refused all work under military control. First, a Board of Inquiry was appointed to visit the various camps in which conscientious objectors had been segregated and separate those who were sincere from the spurious ones. Such as were found to be sincere were to be sent to a detention camp at Ft. Leavenworth from whence they were to be furloughed to farm work. Court martial was provided for three classes—the insincere, the defiant, and such as were engaged in active propaganda among their fellows. The first class was to be sent into the ranks; while the other two were to be given prison sentence.

This program was never fully carried out. Had that been done the problem of the objector would have been fairly satisfactorily settled. Farm furlough was the kind of work all would have been glad to accept, as well as reconstruction work of some sort in France. Farm furloughs were not everywhere successful, however, due to the antagonism against the objectors in the communities to which they had been sent for work. And so, many were retained in camp to the end; others who had been sent out had to be returned. Almost to a man they had been declared to be sincere by the Board, and yet a number were sent to Leavenworth instead of the farm or Reconstruction work on a technical charge of "willfully disobeying military orders," a charge without which of course there would have been no conscientious objectors at all. Those who went to Leavenworth, therefore, were not transported to a detention camp, but sentenced to prison.

In the meantime while the young men were valiantly contending for their non-resistant principles in the camp, the church committees already spoken of gave them such support as they could, representing their cause at Washington, visiting them in camp, and often interceding in behalf of more humane treatment for them before camp officials.

At a session of the Western District Conference committee at Newton on June 22, 1917, at which representatives of the Krimmer Brethren and the Mennonite Brethren were present, it was decided to send Kliever, Richert, and Krehbiel to Washington with a view of requesting complete exemption for the conscientious objector; failing that then some sort of agricultural service not connected with the military department of the Government; and as a third choice Red Cross work either at home or abroad; if they failed in all these, then the committee was to attempt to find out at least what the President regarded as non-combatant work. They interviewed numerous Senators and Congressmen, General Crowder, and Secretary Baker; but they were not able to see the President. All these received the committee kindly, and heard their requests sympathetically, but without any definite assurance of an early solution of their problem. In a letter which the committee sent to General Crowder on July 2, regarding the kind of non-combatant service which in their opinion would meet the scruples of the conscientious objectors, they mention irrigation projects, farming of public lands, drainage projects, building of bridges, supervision of family relief, clerical work, Red Cross abroad, and reconstruction work abroad, any kind of service taking care of the sick and wounded—in fact any work which had for its aim the support of human life, outside of the military establishment.

The committee also supported the men in camp in their refusal to accept work of any kind. The service which the President declared to be non-combatant in 1918, in the Medical, Commissary and Quartermaster departments did not clear up the situation any for the absolutists; for all this work was still a part of the war program. When the War department finally realized

during the summer of 1918 that no amount of coercion or threatening could shake the religious convictions of the objectors not to participate in any way in the war program, they decided to meet their scruples. On July 13, 1918, the committee was advised by Assistant Secretary Keppel, who had charge of the Conscientious Objector division, that the department had devised a new form of hospital service which he thought would fully meet the approval of all those who had thus far refused non-combatant service on religious grounds. The committee, after this interview, returned from Washington, feeling that the Government authorities were honestly endeavoring to meet the needs of the conscientious objectors. On their return they reported to their constituents as follows:

We feel that we should state it as our conviction that the heads of the War Department are sincerely endeavoring to handle the problem of the non-resistant citizens with a most sympathetic spirit of kindness, fairness, and considerateness. careful that the individual freedom of conscience should be sacredly respected and shielded. That such a spirit prevails at Washington in this trying time may well be recognized by all Mennonites as a cause of deepest gratitude to God and the Government.

The form of this new service is indicated by an order issued on July 30, 1918, by Adjutant-General J. B. Wilson, and sent to all the department commanders:

Work in the reconstruction hospital of the medical corps is hereby designated as a special class of non-combatant service. It is found that certain men evidently sincere in their objections to accepting any existing non-combatant service would be willing to accept work in aid of men who themselves are not returned to military service. Men assigned to such work should be granted a certificate limiting their service to this particular branch of the Medical corps.

Thus as a result of the stand taken by the conscientious objectors themselves, and through the efforts of this committee together with others working toward a similar end, the War Department finally worked out a solution of this problem which was fairly satisfactory to all parties during the remainder of the war.

Just how much the committee above contributed to this result we are not able to tell; but of all the various Mennonite committees that had occasion to represent the different branches of the church at Washington, that of the Western District undoubtedly, because of the high degree of intelligence, the broad sympathy, and superior tactfulness of its personnel, was the most influential with the authorities.

Unfortunately, however, this solution came a little late to be of the greatest service either to the Mennonites or to the Government. Some seventy-six sincere Russian Mennonites as well as many others had already been sent to Ft. Leavenworth, and the rest were still in camp marking time. Only a few had been admitted to farm furlough, or the Friends Reconstruction work abroad. For the future, no doubt, had the war continued any length of time, the results would have been happier.

Not only were the conscientious objectors subjected to the grossest abuses in camp; they were also most bitterly reviled and denounced by the entire press of the country, the *Kansas City Star* and the *Chicago Tribune* being the middle west papers that were especially severe and unfair in their criticism. There were very few voices raised in their behalf in the pulpit or on the platform. Everywhere they were denounced as slackers, cowards, parasites, draft-dodgers; the most charitable epithet applied to them was that of religious fanatics. Such men as Theodore Roosevelt, always intolerant of any opinion contradictory of his own, were most vindictive in their utterances on the subject. Roosevelt suggested that all men who had conscientious scruples against war service should be sent to the most dangerous points of the front line with shovels to dig trenches; or be placed on mine sweepers; they were not fit to live in America, he said, and ought to be denied all political rights. It was only such journals as the *Survey*, the *Nation* and the *Republic*, and such organizations as the National Civil Liberties Bureau that dared raise a voice in behalf of freedom of speech and liberty of conscience. They gave the abuses heaped upon the conscientious objectors in camp and prison wide publicity which no doubt contributed greatly to the

abolition of manacling, and other severe measures that were common during the early period of the war.

While much of this bitterness must be ascribed to war madness, yet some of it no doubt was due to the failure to understand the character, and appreciate the point of view of the men who refused war service on the ground of conscientious convictions. The average citizen is so thoroughly indoctrinated all through his life in the school, from the pulpit and the platform, and by the press with the idea that it is his most sacred duty to come to the defense of his country with gun and sword whenever called upon, that unless he has been brought up in one of the non-resistant denominations which make opposition to war as well as the taking of human life for any purpose whatever a fundamental religious doctrine, he utterly fails to appreciate how any one can have any conscience against the practice of warfare. Many regarded the conscientious objector as an ordinary draft-dodger, trying to shirk his honest duty; or endowed with a yellow streak that made him cringe from danger. Undoubtedly even under the most favorable circumstances there would have been considerable opposition to the granting of special privileges and exemptions even on grounds of religious scruples; yet a better understanding of the real spirit of the conscientious objector might have disarmed his more intelligent critics at least of some of their bitter antagonism.

A coward certainly he was not. The conscription act offered an easy way out for those who had scruples against war. Half of the Mennonites, and nearly all the Dunkards and Quakers accepted this easy escape. But the other half of the Mennonite contingent in the camps, refusing to compromise with their conscience, took the hard way. Who dares to call them cowards? Major Kellog, one of the members of the Board of Inquiry, credits them with both sincerity and courage. Certainly it would have taken much less courage to accept some clerical work in the department designated by the President as non-combatant, with the approbation of their fellows, which they could have had for the asking, than to face guard house and prison sentence, physical

suffering, and worst of all, the curses of their comrades, by refusing to work. Neither was he a slacker. He was willing to do any kind of work, in the danger zone or out, if its purpose was to save life rather than to destroy it; and if it was not connected with the military establishment. He was neither a coward nor a slacker; he chose the hard road of loyalty to his convictions rather than the easy one of compromise. He was made of the same stuff as his forefathers who some four hundred years earlier went to the martyr's stake by the thousands, rather than surrender religious beliefs which they thought to be right.

But even the warmest friends of the conscientious objector sometimes wondered whether he did not carry his logic to unnecessary lengths, and whether at times he did not strain at a gnat to swallow a camel. Why did he refuse to sow grass seed on the lawn in front of his barracks, or join the kitchen force at the mess hall? For two reasons—to cook for the soldiers under military orders, and as a part of the military machine committed him as much to the whole killing process as if he actually carried a gun to shoot his fellow; secondly, the whole purpose of the camp officials in their policy toward the conscientious objector was to break down his morale, to find a flaw somewhere in his logic, or by setting a trap for him to inveigle him into active service. If he could be induced to take one form of service he might be led by easy stages into any other form. The objector knew the purposes of the army officers, and drew the line at the only logical place possible, namely to refuse work of any sort connected with the military machine. That this was the situation at least in camp Funston is shown in the following letter:

Nov. 18, 1917.

Hon. Arthur Capper,
Governor of State of Kansas.
Dear sir:

Your letter of Nov. 10 accompanied by a petition from various Mennonites, addressed to Gen. Wood, has been referred to this office. I have carefully gone over these petitions and wish to advise you that in every way we are carrying out the War Department instructions in

regard to the Mennonites and Conscientious Objectors. Further there is nothing we can do in the matter. *If these Conscientious Objectors under the care and treatment they receive at this Camp can be talked into rendering any kind of work that is connected with military service by their fellow soldiers it does not appear that their belief can be very solidly grounded*³.

Very respectfully,

N. C. Shiverick,

Major Ad. Gen., U. S. A.

Unable to appreciate the conscientious scruples against war, and failing to convict the objector of cowardice, many tried to explain him on the basis of low mentality. Accordingly the War Department appointed a special psychological board to study the phenomena from a psychological point of view. The investigations were no doubt honestly made, but the results were hardly what those responsible for the appointment had expected. The conclusions of the Board were that the conscientious objectors were above the average of all enlisted men in intelligence; though for obvious reasons the socialists and those who based their objections on intellectual grounds scored higher than the purely religious objectors on an average.

In view of these findings, the superficial impressions of Major Kellog regarding the intelligence of the Mennonites can hardly be taken seriously. He is speaking, of course, of Mennonites in general and not only of those of Russian descent. The Old Order Amishman "who shuffles into the room, only half awake, with features that are heavy, dull and almost bovine" no doubt made a poor impression on the Major, not because of his lack of intelligence so much as because of his natural timidity due to his rural training and the limited social circle within which his life interests were confined. No intelligent man, of course, will deny the fact that both the Old Order Amishman and the Hutterite need a much higher educational standard than he now possesses to make him the most useful kind of a citizen; but these groups do not con-

³The Italics are mine.

stitute more than a small fraction of the entire Mennonite body. The statement that fifty per cent of the Mennonites examined by the Board of Inquiry "should never have been admitted into the army at all because of stupidity and ignorance" is certainly far beyond the mark if it applies to the Mennonites as a whole. Among the one hundred thirty Mennonites at Ft. Leavenworth, who it is reasonable to suppose constituted the most conscientious of the conscientious objectors, there were besides Huterites and Amishmen quite a number of college students and college graduates, and several college professors.

The criticism made above most assuredly would not hold true for the group of Mennonites under discussion in this chapter. Most of the boys in camps Funston and Travis came from a constituency that had grown up almost within the shadow of three Mennonite colleges in central Kansas. Every Mennonite community here built a preparatory school if there was no high school convenient. The education of their children was one of the first concerns of the pioneer settlers of 1874. These pioneers organized a teachers' conference before there was one for preachers. Undoubtedly the Russian Mennonites have a higher standard of education for their young people than other similar rural groups. The Russian Mennonite young men in camp were not slackers, nor cowards; nor were they ignoramuses.

Major Kellog should remember that the Mennonites are a rural people; many of them speak the German language; and it may be true that many of them take less interest than other groups in much that goes for "news" in the papers today. Being conscientious objectors, and opposed to the whole war machine, naturally they would not know the names of as many French generals as those who had a greater interest in war news. As for the ignorance regarding the Lusitania, the writer can testify from years of experience as a college teacher that there are quite a number of non-Mennonites and college graduates who might have considerable difficulty in stating specifically just what the Lusitania had to do with the war. The fact that some of the objectors had less exact knowledge concerning current war news than

others is by no means a test of their general intelligence, but rather of their lack of interest in the subjects concerned. While they may have ranked lower in newspaper "intelligence" it is a certainty that even the most "stupid" would have ranked high in a test on familiarity with the Scriptures, in comparison with even the brightest of the camp officials. Each lived in a slightly different world, and showed greatest intelligence in the world in which his chief interests lay. No one would accuse Henry Ford, who in twenty years by his own efforts raised himself from a position of poverty to that of the richest man in the world, of lacking essential intelligence; and yet only a few years ago Henry Ford had never heard of Benedict Arnold.

Refusal to participate in war activities was not confined to the boys in camp; Mennonite civilians at home also had plenty of opportunity to test out their peace principles. The war demanded such a complete mobilization of all the resources of the country that any one who refused for any reason whatsoever to enter wholeheartedly into the various bond, Red Cross, and Y. M. C. A. drives was immediately singled out by his neighbors as a subject for special attention. The Mennonites of Russian descent quite generally favored all relief measures such as Red Cross and Y. M. C. A. drives; even in their native land during the Crimean war the Mennonite settlements which were not far removed from the battle fields, did valuable voluntary service in taking care of the wounded, bringing many of these into their own communities from the scene of action. During the recent war, too, the Mennonites of Russia contributed some 11,000 young men for voluntary hospital service, who equipped entirely at their own expense some of the finest Red Cross units in the Russian army. And so in America the Russians as a whole entered heartily into Red Cross campaigns; and in all purely relief drives donated much more liberally than others.

But as to buying bonds there was considerable hesitancy at first. 'Furnishing money to carry on the war seemed to many as inconsistent with their doctrine of non-resistance as to engage in actual service in the field. During the first and second drives the

opposition to the purchase of bonds was quite general; but under strong pressure from local committees and Councils of Defense many of the Mennonites during the later drives compromised their consciences a bit and purchased bonds. The young men in camp, who refused non-combatant service in the army felt keenly this weakening of the faith of their elders at home, who seemingly were not willing to suffer the same humiliation and persecution for their beliefs as were those in camp. Logically no doubt the young men were correct. All of which goes to show that idealism still governs the young more than the old; and that the salvation of the world depends more on the former than the latter, a very general belief to the contrary notwithstanding.

Naturally the refusal to enter enthusiastically into the various community drives proved decidedly unpopular; and often called forth a spirit of intimidation on the part of local officials and local committees as bitter as that found in the various camps. Church houses were occasionally painted yellow and placarded; several men in Kansas were tarred and feathered. In Oklahoma one minister was seized by a mob and strung up to the beam of a telephone post; and was saved from disastrous consequences only by the timely arrival of local county officials. Two other men were attacked by a mob and driven out of the community for preaching to their people the doctrine of non-resistance. At Inola two Mennonite meeting houses were burned down, as was also a barn which had been temporarily used by the congregation as a place of worship. Scarcely a Mennonite community escaped some form of intimidation from local mobs, or self-styled vigilance committees of various sorts.

Especially harsh was the treatment accorded the Huterites of South Dakota. As indicated elsewhere, the Huterites, both in camp and outside, were perhaps the most uncompromising of all the Mennonite groups, and the most consistent in following out their non-resistant principles to a logical conclusion. Add to this their German speech, peculiar customs and dress, and their seclusion from the rest of the world, and you have a combination that was especially provocative of severe criticism on the part of the

rest of the community and the public at large who neither understood nor appreciated their life history. The Huterites were opposed to any contribution that directly aided the carrying out of the war program, but were perfectly willing to give generously to any relief measures that were in no way connected with the army establishment, nor meant to promote the war cause. Under pressure, however, and with the understanding that their contributions would not be used for direct war purposes the colonies in Beadle county where opposition was most severe, gave \$10,000 for relief work. All the colonies in South Dakota through means more or less indirect with similar understandings contributed toward the purchasing of bonds, and Red Cross work about \$30,000⁴.

This sum evidently was not sufficient, however, to satisfy the local County Councils of Defense; for the officials of that organization, together with local county officers appeared at the Bruderhofs in the northern part of the state and forcibly drove away hundreds of head of cattle and sheep which they sold, investing the proceeds in war funds. The State Council of Defence, not to be outdone by the local organization in a show of patriotic ardor, finally brought suit against the colonies which had been chartered by the state as a religious corporation, for the purpose of annulling their charter. The technical ground on which the action was based was that being a corporation for profit rather than a mere religious organization they had in various ways forfeited their rights guaranteed them by law; but the real purpose of the whole proceeding was to drive the Huterites out of the state. In this they succeeded; for the Courts annulled the charter, and although the decision was appealed to higher courts, the Huterites in the northern counties practically all sold out and moved to Canada. The Wolf Creek and several other colonies in the southern part of the state are all that are left in the United States today.

⁴See article by Professor G. S. Young. *The Mennonites in South Dakota*, in *South Dakota Historical Collections*. Vol. X., p. 470.

CANADA

Of all the countries in which Mennonites are found today, none has shown a higher regard for conscientious scruples in times of war than the Dominion of Canada. Mennonites were exempted from militia service in every militia statute that was passed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A law passed in 1808, applying to what was then upper and lower Canada relieved from militia service "Quakers, Mennonites, and Tunkers, who from certain scruples of conscience decline bearing arms" upon the payment of 20 shillings annually in time of peace, and four pounds in times of war. This provision was confirmed by later statutes until 1855 when religious non-resistants were unconditionally exempted. A year after the founding of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, a provision was inserted in the militia laws of that year that "any person bearing a certificate from the society of Quakers, Mennonites, or Tunkers, or any inhabitant of Canada of any religious denomination otherwise subject to military duty but who from the doctrines of his religion is averse to bearing arms, and refused personal military service shall be exempt from such service when balloted in time of peace or war upon such conditions and such regulations as the Governor or Council may from time to time prescribe." This clause was confirmed in later statutes, and was the law at the time of the passing of the conscription act of 1917. This last act exempted all who had conscientious scruples from combatant service only; but the Russian Mennonites and the Doukaboors who had been promised complete freedom from military service in the Orders in Council of 1873 and 1898 respectively were relieved from all military duty. It will thus be observed that the Orders in Council of 1873 passed for the benefit of the Russian Mennonites were based on exemptions which had already been placed on the statute books in 1868.

The promise made to the Russian immigrants by the Canadian government in 1873 was observed to the letter in 1917. All descendants of these Mennonites were exempted from military service, not even being compelled to register. Nowhere else in the world did Mennonites enjoy such privileges during the recent war

as in Canada. It was a question at first whether all Mennonites should share these privileges with the Russians. For a time a difference was made between the Russians in the West and the older groups in Ontario where a number were drawn into camp, and several were courtmartialed for refusal to accept service. Finally all were placed on an equal footing, and none were required to serve even as non-combatants. Other non-resistant denominations such as the Dunkards did not fare so well; for they were generally forced to appear in camp where they took their stand as non-combatants. The special concessions made the Mennonites, no doubt, were due to the promises of 1873 to the Russians from which all groups now benefited. As to other war activities the Canadian Russians supported Red Cross and other relief campaigns quite liberally.

There was considerable opposition among the Canadian people, especially in Saskatchewan, to the liberal policy of the Government toward the Mennonites; and as the war progressed, a strong sentiment developed in favor of the repeal of these special concessions. Due largely to the influence of ex-service men, Mennonites were practically disfranchised for a time. With the coming of the Huterites from South Dakota to escape military service in the United States and share the exemptions of the Mennonites in Canada, the opposition grew more bitter, resulting finally in the passage of a law forbidding the immigration of all Mennonites to Canada. A little later, after the war, public schools with the English language were prescribed for all the so-called foreign groups—Germans, French, Slavs and others, resulting as we have already seen in the migration of some five or six thousand Old Colonists to Mexico.

It is a fine tribute to the economic worth and moral integrity of the Mennonites, however, that with the exception of the regulations regarding the English language in the schools, none of these disabilities have survived the period of war madness. Not only were the restrictions against immigration completely removed, but concessions denied all other people have since been offered Mennonites from Russia as an inducement to settle on

the frontier lands of the Northwest. Such was the reputation that the immigrants of 1874 had won for themselves that in Canada the name Mennonite has always stood since then for thrift and industry, honesty and moral integrity. And so the Canadian Pacific railroad did not hesitate, after the Government had removed all these early restrictions, during the past few years to advance over a million dollars to the poverty stricken Mennonite farmers in Russia for passage money from the country of the Bolsheviks to the prairies of western Canada, with no more assurance that they would be repaid for their outlay than the promise of the immigrants, and the guarantee of a small committee of Canadian Mennonites. Several hundred thousand dollars has already been paid back from the labor of the recent immigrants themselves; and the Canadian Pacific is so sure that their faith in Mennonite integrity has not been misplaced that they are willing to take chances on thousands of others who are awaiting an opportune time in Russia to start life over again in America.

DATE DUE SLIP

DOE WITH MAR 06 '81	RETURN NOV 22
DUE RUTH MAR 20 '81	DUE RUTH JAN 11 '88
DUE RUTH APR 05 '81	JAN 07 RETURN
MAR 24 RETURN	RUTH MAR 21 1989
	MAR 30 RETURN
DUE RUTH APR 07 1984	DUE RUTH MAY 7 '85
	APR 25 RETURN
APR - 9 RETURN	
DOE WITH MAR 10 1985	Due Ruth JUN 09 '89
MAR 13 RETURN	
APR 03 '85 RUTH	MAY 30 RETURN
APR - 2	RUTH FEB 10 1990
DATE DUE JUN 03 '85	
MAY 27 RETURN	DUE RUTH MAR 30 '92
DEC 02 '85 RUTH	MAR 31 '90
	Due Ruth JUN 29 '94
	JUN 2 RETURN
	MAR 10 1998

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SMITH CHARLES HENRY 1875-1948
THE COMING OF THE RUSSIAN
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Smith, Charles Henry, 1875-1948.
The coming of the Russian
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